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OF A STATESMAN.

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Small Books on Great Subjects.

EDITED BY A FEW WELL WISHERS

TO KNOWLEDGE.

N°. XV.

# THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS

## OF A STATESMAN

LONDON
WILLIAM PICKERING
1849

# THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS OF A STATESMAN.

## INTRODUCTION.

THE name of Von Humboldt is too well known in Europe to require that we should give any very detailed account of the writer, from whose letters to a friend the following extracts are taken. Wilhelm Von Humboldt, besides the fame which he has justly acquired as an oriental scholar, was employed largely by his monarch in diplomatic affairs: amongst the rest, he appeared as the envoy of Prussia at the Congress of Vienna. A lady whom he had formerly known, whose fortune had suffered much from the events of the war of liberation, was induced on this occasion to apply to him for assistance in recovering her rights from the sovereigns there represented. His efforts were unsuccessful, but he endeavoured to alleviate her

disappointment, first by pecuniary assistance, conveyed in the kindest manner, and then by supporting her courage under a life of toil and privations; for she honorably resolved to maintain herself by the labour of her own hands. He kept up a correspondence with her till his death, A.D. 1835. His grateful friend thought that the wisdom and kind feeling which had so often consoled her under her afflictions, might have a like comfort for others, and prepared the letters she had received from him for publication after her own death. They have just appeared.

The Editors of the "SMALL BOOKS" think they are doing their readers good service in introducing them to the thoughts and opinions, on many subjects, of this distinguished man. It is no recluse who here preaches from his closet the lessons of religion and virtue: it is the man of the world,—the statesman,—the diplomatist,—whom we find teaching and acting upon the precepts of Christianity. Never was religion shown in a more amiable light than in the outpourings of his benevolent, yet firm mind. We see it as his guide and his support under all circumstances, and yet so unostentatiously so, that but for the publication of these Letters, proba-

bly none but his intimates would have known more of Wilhelm Von Humboldt than that he was a profound scholar, and an able statesman: and the moving spring of all his actions would have remained concealed till the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be made known. It is well for the world that this has not been so: it is well to see the nobleman and the minister of state gathering from Christianity the rule of his life, and depending on its promises with the child-like confidence so acceptable to God. We have only to hope that our readers may find as much pleasure and edification from the extracts we are here enabled to give, as we have ourselves done from the perusal of the original work.

## Letter I.

Vienna, November 3, 1814.

EARLY this morning I received your letter of October 18, and I cannot tell you how much your remembrance of me touched and rejoiced me. I had always thought our meeting in Pyrmont a singular circumstance, for you are much mistaken if you suppose that you had past away from my mind among the dreams of youth. I thought of you often, and sought, though always unsuccessfully, to gain some tidings of you. I supposed you married, and figured you to myself amid a circle of children and friends, where you would long ago have forgotten me; and imagined that I preserved only in my own mind the recollection of those youthful days. Now I learn that your life has been far less tranquil than I supposed. Had you written to me then, when you were suffering most, perhaps I might have been able to afford you some consolation: believe me, my dear friend,—you will forgive me this term of intimacy, since no other eye

than ours will ever see these letters,—man never confides sufficiently in the good feelings of his fellow men. . . .

I have thought over your affairs in many ways to-day, and I entreat you, for the moment at least, to confide yourself to my guidance, and believe one who has more worldly experience than you have, and is well aware of all that is needful in your situation. Set aside at once all minor considerations, place a friendly confidence in me, and afford me the greatest pleasure which it is in your power to give me. What you at present need, both for your bodily health and mental comfort, is rest: the anxious care, as well as labour requisite for providing a maintenance, destroys both the one and the other. When I remember you formerly, you were healthy and strong; and later in life, it seems, you became so again; remain then a year quiet and take care of your health, and you will recover in spite of the storms you have encountered. . . . Which of your plans can be carried out, time alone will show, as well as how far I can be useful to you. I hold it a duty to speak to you quite openly on this head. The Duke's*

* The Duke of Brunswick, to whom Madame * * *

letters are kind, and do him much honour, but he cannot help you just yet, as you will see from the letters of your friends. These things must be left to time and fortune. Meanwhile, allow me somewhat to forestall this time, and give me the satisfaction of knowing that you can pass a year untroubled by these little daily cares. I entreat it as a favour; do not deny it; for that would be a false delicacy, and you may be certain that only you and I shall know anything of this transaction. I am not rich, but I know my own affairs perfectly, and I see from your letter, and the accompanying papers, that you have accustomed yourself to live in the simplest manner; a circumstance which does but increase the respect I feel for your character. I enclose a bill of exchange: I am aware that this cannot supply you for any long time, but follow my plans, write to me as a friend, and after having made your calculation, tell me how much you shall need, including a residence at the Baths during the season. Believe me, I am not doing more than I can well afford, and when your circumstances are improved you may repay it. . . .

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had lent her whole property to assist in carrying on the war of liberation; on his promise of restoring it afterwards, when better times should make it practicable.

Do not suppose that I see anything degrading in your intention of seeking to maintain yourself by your own labour. I will leave you quite free to do so by and by, but, till your health is restored, follow my plan. At present all exertion is ruinous to it. I will now quit this subject, and speak of myself, since you wish it. I married about three years after I saw you; a match of pure inclination; and never, perhaps, was any man so happy in his union. . . . As you say you have heard of me occasionally, you probably know that I was for some years ambassador at Rome. But for the unhappy events of the time, I should not have quitted that situation; but amid such, it was my duty to serve where I was wanted; and thus I was by degrees involved in the turmoil of political life. This, however, is little suited to my taste, and I should rather have chosen a quieter and more retired station. During the war I was at head-quarters, then in England; from thence I went to Switzerland to visit my wife who was there. Now I am at the Congress, and she is gone to her estates, whence she will go to Berlin. After the Congress I shall join her there, and then go to Paris as ambassador. There she will join me after a time. My eldest son is already

an officer in the army; he entered upon active service at sixteen, was wounded, but happily cured, and is now returned to me safe and sound. Besides him I have three girls and a little boy. The two youngest grew partly up in Italy, and when they came to Vienna, the eldest ten years old, did not know a word of German. I wish you could see them: they are two charming creatures.

## LETTER II. p. 7.

Vienna, December 18, 1814.

Your letter has given me great pleasure, and I thank you heartily for it; but you attach too high a value to what was so natural that I could not have done otherwise. I never had, and never could have lost my recollection of you; but it never occurred to me that I was likely to hear of you again; still less, that you retained any remembrance of me. . . . In the emotion and the joy which your letter awoke, I answered it, and I shall always thus answer you; but do not exalt me so high on this account: only remain my friend, and confide in me. Write to me with the same heartiness, the same trust as now; throw aside all reserve as I do with you, and believe your letters can neither come too

often nor be too long. . . . . And now, dear lady, farewell: do not let us become strangers to each other again. Strange circumstances have brought together once more two persons who met long years ago, with scarcely a chance of ever seeing one another again; and this kind of pure and deep-felt pleasure occurs so seldom, that I value it the more, and freely avow that your image, from that time to this, has been intimately connected with all the feelings of my youth; with all my recollections of that period; and even of a better and happier state of Germany and the world in general, than the present. Besides all this, I have a great love for the past. Only what is consigned to its keeping is eternal and unchangeable, as in death; but, like life, it remains warm, and capable of still conferring happiness.

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*** The Editors have given portions of these two first Letters, although only relating to the private affairs of the correspondents, as a necessary introduction to the rest. In what follows, they have selected subjects of more general interest and application.

## Letter IX. p. 25.

You need not fear that I should blame or endeavour to lessen your love of retirement. Your old friend C. however, meant it kindly when he endeavoured to procure you more of society, and imagined you would enjoy it. I do not think so; and even had I thought so, should not have advised it. It is my own fashion of thinking and acting,—that indeed I might pass over,—but it is also my view as regards others, to think far less of happiness and enjoyment on earth, than of the inward state of mind: and this is generally improved by a somewhat solitary life, and still more by the taste for this kind of life. Nay, even if the taste does not exist originally, the character is gradually improved by forcing ourselves to enjoy it.

P. 30. No man's life is free from struggles and mortifications, not even the happiest; but every one may build up his own happiness by seeking mental pleasures, and thus making himself independent of outward fortune.

## Letter X. p. 31.

I do not quite agree in what you say relative to the mode of treating others by humouring

their natural bent. I may do so myself, sometimes, because I can thus gain my end more easily, sometimes because,—as I am not called upon to reform my neighbours against their will,—they are better pleased with it, and we naturally like to give pleasure; but as far as regards myself, I do not wish it; and would always rather that my peculiar cast of mind should be disregarded in my intercourse with men. For otherwise, what is it but to be thought so fixed in our habits as to be incapable of change, and perhaps thus to be strengthened in bad ones; for no man's character is free from faults, and these faults gain force by indulgence. I know very well that I have many times been heartily vexed when thwarted or blamed: but this sort of vexation is wholesome, and true happiness does not consist in a complete freedom from all pain. In proportion, therefore, as I am on intimate terms with any one, when I see that he willingly labours to improve his character, and does not shun mortifications as long as they are beneficial, I consider the bent of his mind the less, and may thus, probably, appear to spare those the least whom I esteem the most.

### Letter XI. p. 37.

Every man, however good he may be, has a yet better man dwelling in him which is properly himself, but to whom, nevertheless, he is often unfaithful. It is to this interior and less mutable being that we should attach ourselves, not to the changeable, every-day man.

### Letter XII. p. 45.

. . . You must not wonder that I gave you this information* so late. I give it now only because you wish it. It is not my habit in general to speak of what I feel towards a friend to any other than to himself, nay, it goes against me to do so. I know it is a common notion that a mutual communication of joy, sorrow, or whatever else may occur, is a necessary part of friendship: in order, as it is said, that the one friend may share in the life of the other. But my heart might be full of either sorrow or joy, and yet I should never feel any urgent desire to impart it to those whom I love the best; nor do I, unless something else leads to it. I care very little for the events of life, or for good or

* Relating to his own family affairs.

ill fortune as far as regards myself, though God knows it is not so where others are concerned. Thus my actions and dealings are scarcely influenced by these things; and thank heaven! I have something better to talk about with those whom I value, as I do you, than the paltry affairs of common life. I do just the same with my wife and children: they know absolutely nothing of much of the business I am employed in; and my wife is so much of my opinion on this point, that if by chance she becomes acquainted with anything which I had not told her, or if I should have occasion afterwards to mention it myself, it never once enters into her head to think it strange. Friendship and love require confidence, the fullest and the most heartfelt, but *confidences* between great minds, never!

### Letter XV. p. 52.

. . . Believe me, I always take the most heartfelt interest in your affairs, and that I share in your regret at being obliged, just at this moment, to leave a convenient residence, now become dear to you from long habit. But yet, my dear friend, I could wish that on such an occasion you had a little more firmness—a little more of that interior serenity which opposes a

tranquil front to such accidents, when you have still so much that is enjoyable left. I do not mean to make this a reproach, even of the slightest kind; I would rather do anything than cause you a moment's sadness; but it is my fashion where I am on terms of intimacy to speak the plain truth, without compliment or reserve; to point out openly what does not appear to me to deserve approbation, and to make such representations as in my opinion will tend to strengthen and fortify the mind, and render it more able to support itself, and more independent of outward circumstances. Do not be angry with me, then, at what I have said to you now, or may say hereafter; and do not look upon it as advice easily given by one whose happier position secures him from similar discomforts. Happiness does not depend on those outward circumstances from which vexation and contradiction arise; and heaven has so wisely distributed these last, that he who outwardly appears the most favoured, is not on that account the more free, even for a moment, from occasion and causes of interior grief. In a life already tolerably long, and certainly not spent in the easiest of positions, many things have happened to me which, for a longer or shorter time, have thrown me

out of my usual course of life, exactly in those parts which touched me the most nearly. Thus I am no stranger to your present feelings, and do not misunderstand, though I cannot sympathize in them entirely. A change of abode, from the pleasantest to the most uncomfortable. —a thing which it has often been my lot to endure,—would have very little influence on my mind. . . . . It does not seem to me that the evil consists in the leaving this house, but in the not having found another equally convenient. Still, notwithstanding all that can be said, the present loss cannot be reasoned away till you have found another situation as satisfactory; but then, my dear friend, there remains, besides the resignation which bends to what is unavoidable, the enjoyment of those mental pleasures which cannot be taken away from you; the thought of all that is dear to you, the society of persons whom you like, the consciousness of a mind pure from offence through a life not without trials,—the satisfaction of a competence secured by your own exertions, and lastly, I say it with joy, since you have often told me so, the correspondence with me, and the certainty that I participate mentally in all the good or evil that befalls you. But man requires a certain firmness

in all circumstances of life, even the happiest, and perhaps contradictions come in order to prove and exercise this; and when we can only determine so to use them, the very effort brings back tranquillity to the soul, which always enjoys the having exercised its strength in conformity to duty.

### Letter XVII. p. 58.

I can perfectly understand your dislike to a town. Were I not kept here (in Berlin) by a regard for my children's comforts, who cannot give up their engagements here, especially in winter, I should remain in the country the whole year. Even where the landscape is not attractive, it is much to enjoy a clear sky. The sight of the heavens, under whatever aspect, has an unceasing charm for me, by night, whether it be gloomy or starlight; by day, whether the eye loses itself in deep blue, or amid passing clouds, or in an unvaried grey, makes no difference: every one of these aspects awakens some especial tone of mind in man; and when we have the happiness not to be dependent on the weather for our mood, we are not obliged to be melancholy because the sky is dark, but can bring forth from our own mind continually fresh

thoughts as outward circumstances vary, a colourless sky is no evil. Complaints about the weather are quite foreign to my nature, and I do not like to hear others complain of it. I consider Nature as a combination of forces, which may afford the purest pleasure if we quietly acquiesce in and accommodate ourselves to all its varying developements, and look at it as a whole of which it matters little whether the smaller details be pleasant, so long as its great cycle of events completes its course. I have an especial delight in living face to face with Nature in the country, so that I may watch the progress of every season in turn. Life may be viewed in the same manner: and it always seems to me, to say the least, an idle question as to whether youth or age is to be preferred, or a bit of each. It is always a self-delusion when we imagine that we could really wish to stand still at any period. The charm of youth consists in the cheerful and unembarrassed advance into life: and this would be lost if it were once believed that this apparent advance was never to lead a step forward, and merely resembled that of a convict in the tread-mill. And the same in age:—it is, in fact, when contemplated fairly and boldly, nothing more than a looking for-

ward *from* life;—an increase of the feeling that we shall leave all things without missing them; though in the meantime we love, and look at them with pleasure, and our thoughts dwell upon them with interest.

Even without attaching any thought of religion to the sight of the heavens, there is something inexpressibly exciting to the mind in thus losing oneself in the infinity of space: it at once takes away from life its little cares and desires, and from reality its otherwise oppressive weight. As surely as the knowledge of man is the first and weightiest concern in the affairs of men, so surely, on the other hand, is there nothing more narrowing to the mind than the perpetually keeping our eyes fixed on the small circle of human beings by whom we are hemmed in. We must return often to the contemplation and feeling of a higher power ruling in human affairs, as we see it in nature, ere we can safely come back to the fetters of society. Only thus do we learn to hold the things of real life to be matters of minor importance, to make less account of good or ill fortune, to be careless about wants and vexations, and to fix our attention solely on the inward frame of mind, and on the changes which take place in it, so as to leave exterior life to a

certain degree out of our consideration. The thought of death has then nothing in it which can frighten or sadden us; we rather enjoy the recalling it, and look on the farewell to life which must follow, as a natural step in the developement of being.

LETTER XIX. p. 71.

I never found that any one but myself could comfort me. It would give me a fresh and yet more unpleasant feeling than that which adversity itself produces, if I became aware that I was not possessed of firmness enough to console myself. . . . I have always striven to stand in need of nothing external. It is not possible, perhaps, quite to reach that point; but if it were possible, we should then first be capable both of feeling and enjoying in the purest and most disinterested manner, the highest kind of friendship and love; for *need* has always something like corporeality in it, even in spiritual things, and all that goes to satisfying a want, is so much taken away from true enjoyment. He who *needs* friendship the least, feels its worth when bestowed upon him in all its fulness and sweetness: it is then a pure and unalloyed pleasure, an accession to that interior existence which already forms his

happiness, and when he bestows it on others they find in it a fuller satisfaction; for he has no selfish views, and thinks of them, not himself. The more firmly and securely two beings can strike root for themselves, the more completely they can grapple alone with their lot, whatever it may be; so much the surer is their union, so much the more lasting, so much the more satisfactory for both. Should this firmness be wanting in one of them, the other may yet supply enough for both; but the common notion that in friendship and love the support is mutual, is a weak one, and only made for persons of the lowest mediocrity of character; for in this case both would be liable to fall, since neither could efficiently prop up the weakness of the other. It is only thus that you must understand me when I talk of independence of character, which I hold to be one of the first requisites of manly worth. A man who, through his own weakness, suffers himself to be tempted and led away, may indeed be good-humoured and amiable in many other respects, but is no MAN.

### Letter XXI. p. 79.

. . . Far more depends on the interior frame of a person's mind than on any single action.

The common run of mankind, however, like the laws, attend only to these last. Not so the Power which looks into the heart:—His decisions are founded on the thoughts, the motives, the whole employment and frame of mind, and thus also does history decide.

### LETTER XXIV. p. 89.

I am desirous of knowing whether you have followed my advice.* The result, to be sure, is uncertain, but the proceeding cannot do any harm, and we never can tell what may happen. I always have held it very important not to neglect any occasion in life which promises advantage, or which may alter the course of things for the better; but rather to avail ourselves of it, and to shape our future proceedings according to what may spring out of the present event. . . . This step of yours, too, will afford you a farther insight into human nature; and excepting where we are ourselves the actors, and can order things as we will, the most useful, and by far the most entertaining part of life consists in the

* In the preceding letter, where M. Von Humboldt recommended his friend to address herself to the Duke of Brunswick by letter as soon as she knew him to be returned to his duchy.

examination and experimental knowledge of mankind. It may be that others do not feel as I do in this respect, but to me it is natural, perhaps even more than is desirable, to view life as a drama; and even where I was so situated as to be obliged to take an active part in it myself, I never failed to find the same pleasure in observing the unravelling of the plot, whether in regard to circumstances or character. I have found this contribute much to my interior happiness, and afford no contemptible assistance in affairs even. The first of these effects is easily to be understood, and it is enjoyed in two ways; for in the first place, there is a positive pleasure in contemplating forces actually at work, and in observing the progress of things which, as well as the consequent circumstances, are in some measure interwoven with unknown causes within ourselves: and then, besides this, by the habit of thus regarding them, we become more indifferent as to the result, at least as far as we are ourselves concerned: for our sympathy with others is by no means lessened by this. In affairs also, we thus gain tranquillity of mind, coolness, and discretion; in great affairs especially, this view of things gives the conviction that even when they take a turn which does not

satisfy us, they follow a course which lies deep in the eternal plans of Providence; and even to guess at the least of these plans is a mental pleasure which exceeds all others. With regard to individual affairs it is otherwise, at least in my mind; for I should deem it a degree of vanity and self-conceit which I could never permit myself to entertain, were I to wish to throw the great plans of the world's course out of their appointed order for my own convenience. My individual interests are, indeed, bound up in the great whole; but they only occupy the space of an atom, and I am no further intellectually concerned than with the regulation of my own conduct under all events; and have only to consider how I bear them;—whether with firmness in adverse, humility in prosperous circumstances; whether, in short, I do what my feelings and my duties require of me: all the rest may turn out as it will; I merely try to accommodate myself to it as well as I can.

## Letter XXIX. p. 106.

You ask me respecting the difference between prophesying and the speaking with tongues, which the apostle Paul mentions in 1 Cor. xix. It is certainly a difficult passage, which we may

think of a great deal and perhaps not come to the true meaning after all. It is indeed one of the beauties of the New Testament, that what is quite clear to be understood is mixed up with what is more obscure. All that man needs for his improvement, for his peace, for the formation of his character, is to be comprehended without difficulty; and the less comprehensible, nay, the obscure passages, do not at all affect these: but as man, even while fulfilling his duties in life (which indeed is the sole thing of necessity in it) needs also something by which he may be led through the depths extending beyond its boundary; and as he can only reach these depths by profound thought; so these portions of a book given him to be always in his hands, tend to fit his mind for such thought. Mysteries are shown him, therefore, which he can only enter into fully by pious and holy reflections. My notion of the passage respecting the speaking with tongues is this:—the apostle opposes to each other the speaking with the tongue or with tongues, and prophesying;—the spirit and the understanding, namely,—for it is thus that Luther has translated the Greek text. By the speaking with tongues, according to my notion, he means that enthusiastic oratory which seems

to be derived from some exterior suggestion, during whose influence we speak what the heart is overflowing with, not at all troubling ourselves as to whether others either hear it or understand it. In this way a man speaks only with himself and with God. By prophesy, the apostle understands not merely predictions of the future, but the public announcement of great and momentous truths. Whoever does this is termed a prophet in oriental speech. Such a teaching has for its object solely instruction and edification: it must be calculated for the hearers;—the words must be prepared *by* the understanding *for* the understanding. Hence the apostle discriminates very justly between the two states of mind, and their relation to each other. Enthusiastic speaking is the first, and in man must be in advance of the other, for on the intercourse which he holds with God and himself, depends his capability of edifying others.* Thereby he edifies himself, as the apostle says,

* "Erbauen." This German word is a strict translation of the Greek οἰκοδομέω, *to build up;* and *edification* has that sense in English sometimes, but not always. Where this word is used by Humboldt, or in the New Testament, it strictly means the building up of the Christian character.

and no man can edify others who is not himself edified. Nevertheless this interior enthusiasm is unfruitful for others; so that for the promulgation of doctrine, prophecy is better; for it is by its means that this spiritual enthusiasm extends its power to others: but the best of all is, to be ourselves thus animated (to speak with tongues) and at the same time to prophesy or instruct. Verse 5 makes this difference very clear. The apostle wishes that all might speak with tongues, but yet more that they might all teach, because this is the most useful, and therefore to be preferred. And this shows us the custom of the early church, where every member of the communion was at liberty to speak. The expression of, *with the tongues*, or *with the tongue*, appears strange, but it is in truth quite proper. In Greek, *tongues* mean unknown, strange, or seldom used words: and this may perhaps be glanced at here: we must recollect, too, that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles had for its consequence that they were enabled to speak in foreign, and, to them, hitherto unknown languages. Both interpretations *may* apply equally to that spiritual inspiration (Begeisterung) under whose influence a man wonders at his own thoughts, and does not

at all consider whether others understand them: but I do not think both equally applicable here; more especially because the phrase is, *to speak with* THE *tongues*, not merely *with tongues*. But the interpretation of the passage may be even yet more simple. When a person speaks of things which he has himself discovered and thoroughly understands, or of what he has cleared up by deep thought, then the tongue is but the dead tool of speech, and it is the understanding which converses with us. But when he says what suddenly occurs to him, and yet upon high and obscure subjects which he has not considered beforehand, and which can only by degrees be cleared up with the aid of the understanding,—for they have been communicated by a spirit not his own, and of a higher nature,—it is not then the understanding which speaks, but the words come to the tongue without any consciousness of how they came. The tongue seems to speak independently of the individual. Properly, this should be termed speaking by the Spirit; but the more figurative expression names the tongue, and because the apostle considers the words thus spoken by the tongue as the dictates of the Holy Spirit itself, so what was thus spoken might well be attri-

buted to the tongue only. The Holy Spirit—that is, God himself, puts these truths in the mouth of man which his understanding could neither comprehend nor discover by itself. We say of a man who speaks what he does not intend, that he speaks from the tongue but not from the heart. Here a somewhat similar expression is used, though differently applied. The tongue speaks,—from interior enthusiastic feeling or divine inspiration,—without the knowledge of the understanding, which can only reason and judge humanly. Thus taken, the precept of the apostle has in it something very beautiful. We should seek, or at least wish to arrive at the point of pious enthusiasm in which we, as it were, hold converse with God, and during which we rather guess than see clearly; but yet more should we endeavour to make what we thus learn clear to the understanding: and when we teach others, we should do it only in the latter mode. I know not if this explanation will satisfy you, but so I understand the passage.

### Letter XXXI. p. 113.

The complete success of our undertakings depends, for the most part, on that original

strength which man has not in his own power. I fully share your opinion, too, that it depends yet more on an inexplicable higher blessing which accompanies every individual, and depends, as you say, upon purity of heart. Your expression, that "it appears as if the Deity poured his blessing only into clean vessels," has pleased me exceedingly. Man has no magic art by which he can obtain this blessing at pleasure when he needs it; but that it really does go along with men in some invisible and secret mode, I believe with you. But the notions of good and ill fortune are so ill-defined and erroneous, even among those who are wont to think rightly on other points, that it has led me from my youth up to endeavour to clear my own judgment of this matter; and as far as I have succeeded in so doing, I have felt that, up to a certain bound at least, a man may always be sure of happiness by making himself independent of outward circumstances—by drawing pleasure from all that is pleasurable in men and things, but without allowing himself to become dependent on them for his satisfaction. Certainly we find our account in this, but all merit ceases when we do a thing merely for its consequences' sake.

## LETTER XXXIII. p. 125.

. . . There is a particular pleasure in withdrawing from all occasions which require us to mix in large assemblages of people. Even whilst quite young, and afterwards in my manhood, I always thought of with much satisfaction, and anticipated in imagination the time when increasing years would give me a sufficient justification for withdrawing more and more from company; and now that I have reached that period, I find what I then felt fully confirmed. I always figured age to myself as a much pleasanter season of life than our earlier years; and having attained it, my expectations are almost surpassed. This may arise from my being, in fact, somewhat older in mind than in years, and bodily strength. I am now fifty-seven, and he who has lived thus far without any extraordinary wear and tear, and especially has been always regular and temperate, and free from disturbing passions, which undermine the health, does not then perceive any notable bodily change. But the peace of the soul,—the freedom from everything which affects or excites the mind unpleasantly,—the almost total independence upon anything which our in-

terior nature and occupations cannot give us;—these things are all hard to attain in earlier years, and sometimes,—and that is worst of all,—are only attained at a later period, when they arise from coldness and apathy. Nevertheless, these are the things especially which afford and secure to us a happy interior life. Hence it is not true, whatever people may believe or say, that age makes us more dependent on circumstances. Corporeally and exteriorly, it is indeed the case, but not, even then, so much as is believed, because,—at least among persons of well-regulated minds, accustomed to self-government,—the desires and needs which we have created for ourselves, cease even sooner than the strength to gratify them. On the other hand, a much more real independence, and one much more necessary to our happiness, is attained. Impatience and want of submission to Providence are, in truth, the things that first give to evils, be they what they may, their real sting, and actually increase them; and it is exactly these two evils that age especially cures; always pre-supposing that the man be free from any of those rooted ill habits which are sufficient to poison happiness at any age. But the chief benefit which arises from this greater men-

tal liberty,—from this freedom from desires and passions, which increasing years bestow, and which may be compared to the cloudless blue of the sky,—is, that our course of thought becomes purer, deeper, and more persevering, and claims more of our whole soul; that the intellectual horizon enlarges itself, and that the pursuit of every kind of knowledge, and every kind of truth, gradually gains a more exclusive hold upon the mind, and silences all other desires and requirements. A reflective, thinking, inquiring life is really the most exalted; but in some sort it can only be fully enjoyed in extreme age, for earlier than that it is always somewhat at variance with business, and even with duty, and thus experiences many hindrances. But it would be wrong if we were to fancy that such a pleasure in reflections which do not depend on this life or its concerns, requires a learned education or great acquirements. When these happen to be possessed, no doubt reflection finds many objects on which to employ itself, and the circle of thought is at least apparently enlarged. But exactly those joyful truths which are the most needful to man—the holiest and the greatest—lie open to the simplest, plainest mind; nay, are not unfrequently better, and even more

entirely grasped by such an one than by him whose greater knowledge more dissipates his thoughts. These truths, too, have this peculiarity, that although they want no profound research to attain to them, but rather make their own way in the mind, there is always something new to be found in them, because they are in themselves inexhaustible and endless. They belong to every time of life, but most especially to that which is in the closest juxta-position to the period when the solution will be given to the enigmata which these truths contain. Thus we find that in advanced age a certain exterior activity decays, but this is often unduly valued: that activity which is much better, fairer, and nobler, and which unfolds itself in a fruit-bearing serenity of mind, belongs most properly to real age. I know that you think as I do on such subjects, and flatter myself that it is not unpleasant to you when I give a free loose to my pen. Those things which we can talk of only with a chosen few, are the most natural subjects for a correspondence which, being free from business, and other exterior fetters, is the pleasantest when it consists in an unconstrained and confiding interchange of opinion and thought.

## Letter XXXV. p. 129.

Tegel, Sept. 12, 1824.

The autumn promises to be very beautiful, and I am doubly gratified at being here again so as to enjoy the last month of the departing pleasant season. I like the end far better than the beginning of the year; we can then look back on so much that we have done or undergone; and we feel a sort of security that the time is shorter, and cannot contain much more of discomfort. All this is, indeed, an illusion, since the time from now to the last day, is, in fact, but one period: but then there is so much in life, nay even in what we consider to be happiness or unhappiness, which is but an illusion, that we need not be above receiving the few quieter moments which this one may afford. I am indeed, in general, free from apprehensions for myself: not because I expect fewer misfortunes than happen to others, but because I fear nothing human: on the contrary, I very early cherished the feeling that we must always be prepared to make our way manfully through whatever lot be appointed to us. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to regard life as an ocean through which we must

steer our vessel with better or worse fortune, and then it is a natural feeling to like rather to have a short than a long voyage before us. This view of life,—as a whole, as a work that must be gone through with,—has always appeared to me a powerful aid towards the meeting death with equanimity. If, on the contrary, we look at life piecemeal, if we try only to add one pleasant day to another, as if we thought this could endure to all eternity, there is nothing more comfortless than to stand close upon the boundary where the series will at once be broken off.

The leaves of the trees are beginning to take the varied colours which so much ornament the autumn, and to a certain degree make up for the loss of the first fresh green. The little place which I inhabit (Tegel) is admirably made to show all the beauties which large handsome trees of different kinds exhibit through all the changing seasons of the year. All round the house they stand broad and spreading, like a green fan. Over the land alleys extend in various directions: in the garden and the vineyard there are fruit trees: in the park is a thick dark growth of underwood: the lake is surrounded with a forest, and the islands in it are bordered with trees and bushes. I have a particular love

for trees, and I do not like to cut them down, nor even to transplant them. There is something melancholy in removing a poor tree from the society in which it has lived so long, to bring it into fresh soil, from which, however much it may disagree with its constitution, it has no chance of escaping any more, but must pine away through a slow exhaustion, awaiting its final death. There is generally an extraordinary character of anxious wish in trees, when they stand so fixed and cramped in the earth, and try to extend their summits and their branches as far as possible beyond the bounds of their roots. I know nothing in nature so formed to be the symbol of desire. Man, too, in fact, with all his apparent freedom of motion, is very much in the same state. He is still confined within a certain space, however widely he may roam: sometimes he can never stir from his small circle, (and this is often the case with women) the same little spot sees his cradle and his grave; or if he removes from it, he is drawn back to it from time to time by his inclination or his duty. . . . . The approach of autumn and winter is particularly uncomfortable for my occupations. My eyes are indeed much amended by the means taken to relieve them, but even now

they require to be spared, and by candle light I do not venture to use them: when to this is added the shortening of the days, the demands of domestic life, visits, interruptions of various kinds, and finally, real business, very little time is left for use; and the longer I continue to devote my hours exclusively to study and reflection, the more my inclination for such employments is strengthened, the more I lose all taste for any other. . . . I can truly say that I live in my own thoughts sometimes for days together, without affording more than a passing notice to any exterior object. I have never felt much attracted by the study of physics: I have not the quick observation requisite for this sort of knowledge: but from my youth up I have been attached to that of antiquity, and it is this which forms my real study. When the human race was nearer its origin, men seem to have had more greatness, more simplicity, more depth and nature in their thoughts and feelings, as well as in the expression of them. It is true we must arrive at the full and clear sight of this by laborious, and often by mechanical acquirements; but in this very labour there is a charm; or even if not, it is at least soon over when we are accustomed to application. Among

the strongest, purest, and finest tones in which the voice of antiquity has reached us, may be reckoned the books of the Old Testament; and we can never be enough thankful that in our translation they have lost so little of their reality and strength of expression.* I have often reflected with pleasure on the existence of so much that is exalted, rich, and varied, as is contained in the Bible, in the books of the Old and New Testament; and if this be, as is very frequently the case, the only book in the hands of the people, yet have they in this a compendium of human thought, history, poetry, and philosophy so complete, that it would be difficult to find a feeling or a thought which has not its echo in these books. Neither is there much in them which is incomprehensible to a common simple mind. The learned may penetrate deeper, but no one can go away unsatisfied.

P. 139. In the moral world there is nothing impossible if we bring a thorough will to it. Man can do everything with himself, but he must not attempt to do too much with others.

* Luther's translation is among the finest renderings ever made of the Hebrew Scriptures. It has the same simplicity and strength which characterises the English Version.

LETTER XXXVIII. p. 143.

You will wonder at receiving a letter from me before the usual time, but I am ill, and am thus hindered from working. At such times I seek in letter writing, and especially in writing to you, a pleasant and congenial occupation. I am among the most patient of invalids; nay I cannot always bring myself to the calling illness an evil. . . . To me the being poorly brings a pleasurable peace and gentleness of feeling. Not that I am particularly different in this respect when I am well; but the occupations of health, especially in men, have an eagerness and action in them which always keeps up some degree of excitement. Sickness puts a stop to this: our activity is at an end; and we expect nothing till we get better.

P. 144. That time is constantly elapsing, and that it should be no less constantly, well and intellectually employed, is the great and weighty concern of human life. Once thoroughly penetrated with this idea, we become very indifferent to happiness or unhappiness, pleasure or pain. What indeed is happiness or unhappiness, pleasure or pain, more than a lapse of time, of which nothing remains to us but the mental profit we have gathered from it?

## LETTER XLVI. p. 173.

Berlin, May 21, 1825.

Whit-Sunday is of all festivals the most joyful, and the most elevating to the mind, withdrawing it from all trifling concerns, and prompting more exalted hopes and firmer resolutions. All festivals—from their origin, and from the circumstances in memory of which they are celebrated—tend to strengthen our persistence in strenuous exertions and worthy employments; and even putting all religious considerations out of the question, they make a useful division in the year, whose monotonous uniformity would otherwise be wearisome. Life seems longer when it is thus thrown into small portions; and this is more than a mere delusion of the imagination; though even if it were nothing else it ought not to be despised. The mere reality of life would be wretchedly poor without the charms of fancy; which, though it may often bring causeless fears as well as empty hopes in its company, yet oftener gives a bright and pleasing colouring to its delusions than a dark one. This, too, is generally in our own power, and it depends on our own mental disposition to see the bright side.

The question which you ask is one of great moral import;—namely, how far we may go in devotion to a beloved person, with the security of losing nothing thereby of God's favour? You have yourself marked the boundary very clearly, but I think some considerations may be added. In the first place, I lay it down as an axiom that nothing can be displeasing to the Deity which accords with an exalted and pure moral perception. This is certainly your meaning also. The Divinity has in these things a moral perception, and especially a moral feeling, which, making yet finer distinctions, may reject what our judgment does not altogether disapprove: but if we go farther than this, and believe that there may be unpermitted things against which our moral sense says nothing, it would appear to me to be either an extravagance, or a defect in the moral feeling. What a really delicate moral feeling does not disapprove, I hold to be also not displeasing to God; for man can only judge humanly. Furthermore, I cannot figure to myself that we need fear the possibility of putting any created being on a level with God in our love. God claims to be loved by us through his creatures, and the proof must be given by the manner in which we behave and

feel towards them. An idolatrous love is rather a phrase, than the expression of an idea. No reasonable person can in any way compare the Highest with a weak and perishable human being. This could only result from unrestrained passion, and then we should find that this passion would not be so pure and spotless, even towards the creature beloved, as to stand wholly without blame before a pure moral feeling. Thus everything comes back to the same point. You must, however, fully understand that when I speak of moral feeling, I always understand that it shall be purified by true piety. The moral sense removed from religion, has a good chance of losing its way. Furthermore, I do not mean any obscure feeling: it must be grounded on well-considered views, and a sound judgment; and only to a certain degree go beyond these to decide with yet more delicacy, as the music of a song adds somewhat to the dry idea of the poetry. An inclination, therefore, which is approved by such a feeling, needs not be anxious to set bounds to itself as to the degree. Whatever point it may reach, it remains a pure and pious inclination, that will never put the creature in the place of the Creator; and will never be tempted away from this

last. That God may any day call away the object of such an affection, is indeed certain; but where the affection is such as I have described, such a circumstance may plunge the person who suffers it in deep affliction, but will not rob him of his firmness: for no affection could be approved by a religious moral feeling, that would not be capable, in such a case, of submitting with humble faith to the arrangements of Providence. All the rest seems to me to be understood of itself.

### LETTER XLIX. p. 190.

What you say respecting the influence which the quicker or slower circulation of the blood has upon the mind, is perfectly true, and must never be left out of our calculation in judging of others. There is, however, one excellent attribute which the Deity has bestowed upon man, and which distinguishes him from all other creatures,—i. e. that be the influence as strong as it may, he is, and feels that he is able by rational thought, and a strong will, to set bounds to, and to rule it. There is a voice in the human soul which tells him that he is free and independent, and which charges to his account all his good and evil thoughts and actions; and this judgment

of ourselves which must always be stronger and severer than that of others, leaves out of the question all these bodily influences. There are two different jurisdictions in the world; that of Dependence, and that of Freedom, and the dispute between the two cannot be settled by mere reason. In the visible world all things are so enchained one with another, that could we know all the circumstances down to the smallest and most distant, we might prove that the individual is compelled at every moment to act as he does: yet notwithstanding this, he has always the feeling that did he choose to arrest the wheels in their course, and free himself from the links which connect him with them, it is in his power. In this consciousness of freedom lies his worth as a man,—this it is which makes him enter this world like the denizen of another, for what is only earthly can never be free, and what is spiritual can never be in bondage. All this apparent contradiction is only to be reconciled thus: that the free or spiritual power exercises a right of lordship over the dependent or earthly, which in single circumstances we do not perceive, but which has so guided the series of events from the beginning, that they must correspond with the free determination of the will.

As far as I can understand your state of health, my dear friend, it greatly depends on that of your mind. Endeavour then, above all things, to calm and to cheer it. This, indeed, is easier to say than to do; but much may nevertheless be accomplished if we will only clearly define to ourselves all that appears to give room for apprehension, and on the other side place all that may make us contented with our lot, or even afford cause for thankfulness. If the spirit can so far prevail as to remove the sickness wholly from itself, and banish it into the body only, an immense step is gained; and we may then bear bodily ailments not only with apparent, but with real firmness and tranquillity; and not only bear, but draw from them much that softens and purifies the soul. I myself indeed, though I have been often ill, and occasionally dangerously so, have never had to endure a lasting sickness, or even what may be deemed a weak constitution. But I have intimately known many, both men and women, with whom this was the ordinary state, and who had no hope of escaping from it but by death. To this class belonged Schiller especially. He suffered much, he suffered continually, and knew, as indeed happened afterwards, — that this continual suffering would lead him step by

step to the grave. Yet one might truly say of him that he held his illness confined in the body, for at whatever time you visited him, or under whatever circumstances you might meet him, his mind was always calm and cheerful; ready to adapt itself to friendly intercourse, or to interesting, and even philosophic conversation. He was indeed wont to say that a man worked better under the influence of illness, if it were not *too* severe; and I have seen him under circumstances which certainly afforded nothing cheering, compose both poems and prose pieces which betrayed no traces in their composition of the illness of the writer.

If debility and a hurried circulation be united with disquiet or anxiety, and these sufferings endure for many years, I can comprehend that weariness of life must be the result; but against this we should labour with all our strength. I will not go back now over the ground that this is a clearly expressed religious duty, but will merely suggest that life, even when it lasts the longest, is so short, compared with the endless period during which we can have no clear conception beforehand of what the kind of existence will be that we shall enjoy, that no one need wish to draw its boundary nearer, but rather make up

his bed in it as quietly as he can. And this determination is almost more just according to the view which man is wont to take of his fate, than according to what that fate really is. It is a proverbial saying that every one makes his own destiny; and this is usually interpreted, that every one by his wise or unwise conduct prepares good or evil for himself: but we may also understand it that whatever it be that he receives from the hand of Providence, he may so accommodate himself to it, that he will find his lot good for him, however much may seem to others to be wanting.

### Letter LX. p. 238.

Even in events which influence whole states, the only really important part of them is their effect on the activity, the mind, and the feelings of individuals. Man is, after all, the centre of all this movement, but in the end each person remains so far insulated, that what goes forward in his mind, and proceeds from it, is all that is of any importance to him. However much while living on this earth he may be involved in social ties and sympathies, the last great journey which is prolonged beyond the boundary of earthly things, must be taken alone;

—no one can accompany him, although certainly there is in the mind of every man an anticipation that we shall find again beyond the grave those who have gone before us, and again assemble around us those whom we leave behind. No man of any feeling can forego this anticipation; —I might rather call it confident belief,—without at the same time giving up the larger portion of his happiness, and that precisely which is the noblest and the purest. Holy Scripture too justifies him in this expectation. But this makes no difference in what I first said, that whatever relates to our artificial institutions is no farther advantageous to man generally than in so far as it has an influence on individual character. All improvements in education, all amendment of things and institutions, all perfectionizings of states, and of the world itself, is merely imaginary where it does not show itself in its effects on individual man; and thus in all historical events, even the greatest, I consider only the individuals of the human race, and their power to think, to feel, and to act. The universality of the effect has only this advantage, that it influences many at once, or that from that effort many others may arise, and its greatness is only that it either calls into action, or creates extraordi-

nary and unwonted powers: and it is thus that private is connected with public life. What we observe in the one will equally be found in the other, with this difference merely, that other motives impel to other actions. The stage only is altered—the drama and the objects which please us are the same. When events are viewed thus they gain, in my eyes at least, a higher, and at the same time a stronger interest.

### Letter LXI. p. 243.

You speak with disgust of many vices with reference to their consequences, and ask my opinion thereupon. I acknowledge that I neither like nor approve those views which place all morality in particular virtues, which are set in opposition to certain vices. I cannot say which I most abhor among those which may be ranked under the class of pride, avarice, waste, or licentiousness: that depends on circumstances, for each may be worst according to the way in which it shows itself. I do not form my judgment of men therefore upon their overt acts, but upon the disposition which is the foundation of all thoughts, designs, and actions; and upon the entire frame of the mind and temper. Whether these are tuned in accordance with, or in oppo-

sition to duty, is the only thing that I think about. If two or three men have, in an equal degree, a mean, selfish, common-place character, it matters not to me in what vice these ill qualities show themselves. One or another may be more hurtful or inconvenient, but all are equally bad and despicable. And thus it is with virtues. We may find a person who does not fall into any open immoralities, and practises much that is good; and another, for example, who, through a high spirit or a hot temper, may fall into some faults; yet if this last,—which is very possible,—should have a nobler and loftier character, I should prefer him. But this character depends on two things, first, upon the ideal principles upon and through which a man becomes good; and secondly upon the strength of will by which he will make these ideas available against the license and passions of nature. The men whom I term despicable are those who have no power over themselves; who cannot do what they will; and who even if they appear virtuous, are so from base motives; from a concern for fortune and comfort,—from a fear of remorse, or even of future punishments. It is indeed good and useful to avoid sin, even from these motives alone, but he who looks at the disposition and state of

the soul, cannot have pleasure in such. The nobility of our nature consists in doing good for the good's sake; either from an interiorly recognized law of pure duty, or from a feeling of the exalted nature and attractive beauty of virtue. It is only these motives which show the character to be itself great and noble; and only these re-act upon, and improve it. If then religion unites itself to these, as in worthy minds is always the case; this also can operate in two ways. Religion can neither be felt in its true greatness, nor attained by a mean disposition. He who serves God only out of a regard to his own interests; who thinks only of obtaining in return for his service His almighty protection, assistance, and blessing; who would exact from Him that he shall concern Himself in all the little worldly inconveniences of his lot, makes *himself* the centre of all. But he who in the depth of his heart regards the greatness and fatherly goodness of God with such admiring worship, and with such humble and deep thankfulness, that he has thrust aside all of self that does not accord with the purest and noblest feelings, as well as with the thought that what duty and virtue require of him, is also the will of the Highest, and the demand of that moral order of the world

which He has established;—he, I repeat, is alone the truly religious and virtuous man.

LETTER LXII. p. 247.

It is a thing of every day occurrence for marriage to be undertaken when there is no real preference, sometimes positive indifference: and this from various motives and feelings in themselves far from blameable, but which ought not to be altogether our guides in taking that step. For myself, indeed, and according to my way of thinking, this is scarcely conceivable: it would have been quite impossible for me to think, even, of forming such a connection, unless I felt the fullest conviction that she to whom I united myself was the only being with whom I could enter into such an union. The thought of marriage, even from a really good and friendly intention, accompanied by mutual esteem and liking, without that deep, soul-pervading feeling which we commonly call love, was always repugnant to me. and it would have gone against my whole nature to have married in such a fashion. It is certainly true that marriages entered on with the views I have just spoken of as being my own, are the only ones in which the feelings remain equally strong till death, subject only to the modifica-

tions which time and circumstances bring with them: but it is a very good thing that this mode of looking at the subject should not be the usual one, since if it were, there would be very few marriages.

## Letter LXIII. p. 252.

You ask me what I meant, when I said that the voice which you heard on that November evening was *in yourself*, though you so clearly perceived it to be behind you? It is not possible to explain such a thing completely; and I do not give you my opinion as decidedly the true one; but in regard to what are usually called spirits, and apparitions, I have a belief of my own, which if I may so speak, is made up of a portion both of belief and unbelief. I believe that men may be conscious of such manifestations both as to hearing and sight; and I believe that these are not altogether the produce of a heated imagination, delusions, or what are commonly called, 'waking dreams.' I do not think it impossible that I might experience such myself, for I hold these appearances to be in a certain sense real, and brought about by a supra-mundane power; it is however necessary to examine very closely whether in our particular case it is any thing

more than one of the things dependent on some association of ideas, or some slight variation of these associations, or even a mere sport of fancy. For I do not believe that these sounds or sights are so exterior to the person who is conscious of them, as that of the real voice or entrance of a living man: and for this reason I am also somewhat incredulous as to those stories when a sound is said to have been heard by more than one person. If indeed there are only two concerned, it is possible that the same state of mind may prevail enough in both, to produce a like inward impression: for I hold all appearances to be interior, which cannot produce actual proof of the contrary;—but inward only in this way, that they are actually produced on the interior organs of the senses by a superior power, and hence the man who experiences them, finding that they are not the work of his own mind, but of something foreign to himself, necessarily supposes them to be exterior. However much the subject may be argued, it is impossible to deny that a thing really interior, may often be regarded as exterior by the person who feels it,* and to su-

* When a tendon gives way, the sufferer generally imagines that he has received a violent blow from something exterior.—*Translator.*

pernatural power it is as easy to produce an exterior and corporeal effect, as one merely ideal.

The thought of a hostile, persecuting power has always been foreign to my mind. I could never accept those interpretations which assume the existence of such a being—who finds pleasure in evil, and is the enemy of all good. I consider the passages in the New Testament which appear to favour such a notion, as figurative expressions, suited to the then Jewish views, and meant to convey the idea of the evil which man has always to fight against in himself, even though good on the whole, and free, as he thinks, from the inclination to sin. There are doubtless persons who experience more adverse than good fortune, and even the happiest have to endure longer or shorter periods, during which circumstances do not favour them, and they have to swim against the stream; but this,—where it is not at all our own fault,—nor the consequence of any ill-calculated proceeding on our part,—is often the result of the natural connection of events necessary to the well being of the whole, and which in this instance may be (apparently) at variance with the interests of the individual. But very often, and this appears to me by far the most probable, it may be an arrangement of

a wise, and, even in its severe discipline, a beneficent Providence: for a superhuman and supramundane Wisdom does not necessarily take crime as the foundation or cause of its salutary corrections. It may be among the ways and paths of a discernment, far above that of any human understanding, to discipline even the guiltless, in order to keep him in, or lead him back to the right way: for even the best among us, if he will examine himself strictly, will find himself not free from spots; and these may lie deep in feelings of which he is not yet conscious, and which would have led him into sin, had it not been for this wholesome correction. Man is himself too short-sighted, and his view too much obscured to see this; but the Power which rules on high beholds all, and knows how to lead it to the best possible event. All this I am accustomed to say to myself often, even when there is no immediate occasion for it; but most especially when things turn out contrary to my wishes, and a period of vexation, or of real unhappiness arises. I then become somewhat more cautious and provident in action than before, and without allowing myself to be in the least dejected or saddened, I try to steer my course as prudently as I can. When I say 'without allowing myself to be sad-

dened,' I do not mean that certain misfortunes will not grieve me, for that is unavoidable; but only that I consider their occurrence, as well as the change from good fortune to its contrary, not as any thing hostile, but as something natural; closely bound up with the course of the world and of human nature, and frequently advantageous. According, therefore, to this, my well-grounded faith, I cannot believe in any hostile or even teasing superhuman power; and I confess that I cannot bear others to entertain such a notion, or allow it to pass uncontradicted. It is a dark, narrow idea, inconsistent with the goodness of God, the great course of nature which he has established, and the worth of the human race. On the contrary, the belief in a subordinate guardian power acting under the permission and orders of the Highest, has in it something beautiful, comforting, and suitable to the purest and brightest religious ideas. I would not therefore rob any one of it whose disposition leads him to cherish such a notion. It is, however, one not natural to me, and belongs at all events, to those religious conceptions which are not required of us universally, but arise on the contrary in those only whose individual character they accord with.

## LETTER LXIV. p. 256.

Your letter gave me great pleasure, because you go fully into the contents of my last, and bring forward your reasons for opposing it. It is very easily to be understood, and very natural, that our views should at times differ; and this arises in the first place from the difference of sex, and next from the manner of life, and the habits which this induces. A man, and yet more, one much engaged in affairs, where he must look to his own mind alone for counsel and defence against difficulties and dangers, will depend more on his own strength, and make larger demands upon it. He must confide in himself, must bear more; and, in order to be master of himself, must face with more indifference the vexation and unhappiness from which none are free, but which occur oftener, and are more felt in affairs where we are acting for others, than in the smaller concerns of common life. You must not however suppose that this weakens our sympathy in others' misfortunes, or prevents us from comprehending that every one feels the various events of life according to his peculiar character. But how much soever we may differ on many points which I mentioned in my former letter,

we agree it seems in the wish to have some notice of death's near approach. Thus far I have always thought of death as of a friendly visit which would be welcome to me at any moment; because however contented and happy I may be, this life is always bounded and enigmatical; and the rending of the earthly veil which then takes place, must at once enlarge our view, and solve the riddle. I could for this reason lose myself for hours in the contemplation of the starry heavens because the infinity of those worlds shining from far, appears to me like a bond between this and a future existence. I hope that this joyful expectation of death will never leave me, and I should feel sure of it,—since it is grounded in the depth of my nature, which never attached itself to natural things, but always clung more to the spiritual and intellectual,—were it not that man, however strong he may think himself, depends much on the state of his bodily health at any given moment, nay even on that of his imagination. I do not however positively call myself strong, but rather require of myself to become so: and therefore if I remain in the same mind as now, I should see death approach without any fear, and my care would only be to make my passage to another state

with as full self-possession as possible; and therefore, as far as regards myself, I should not think a lingering death an evil, although a quicker is preferable in some respects, as well for the dying person, as for those who remain behind. . . . . . The passages of scripture which you refer to, when I turned to them were well known to me. They are especially comforting, for they impart hope, call forth confidence, and allow us to reckon upon the compassionate love of our Creator; I think however that these passages accord perfectly with the views which I expressed in my letter; for they may refer to either the future or the present life, but at all events they point to a distant future; but in the mean time the feeling of grief and unhappiness continues; and during this interval, without any reference to change of fortune, the views which I have touched upon, and which you call philosophical, may be of great use. It is however not quite correct to call these views merely and exclusively philosophic. It belongs to a religious frame of mind to look at the lot of man as part of a great connected plan, arranged by the highest wisdom, into which this wisdom has admitted human suffering as a part, although not produced by the fault of the individual; and

since every such plan, whether we view things philosophically or religiously, must awaken and command the deepest reverence, it is at any rate an elevating and consoling thought amid our misfortunes and griefs, that even by means of these sorrows we belong to this eternal plan. If however I were to speak my own opinion fully, I must say that the texts you adduce are not exactly those in which I should seek for my consolation. They belong to the class of promises and hopes; and this mode of living in the future merely, I have never thought right, nor pursued. I have always sought rather so to weave myself into the present, as to be able to win, as far as possible, an interior victory over outward discomfort; and exactly in this point of view the reading of the bible is an infinite, and certainly far the surest source of consolation. I know nothing to be compared to it. The consolation of the bible flows equally, though in different ways, from both the Old and New Testament. In both, the general guidance of God, and the universal government of his Providence is the prevailing idea; and from hence, in religiously disposed minds, springs the deeply fixed, and ineffaceable conviction, that even the order of things under which we ourselves suffer, is the most wisely ap-

pointed, and the most beneficial not only for the whole, but, in consequence of that, for the sufferer himself. In the New Testament there is such a full predominance of the spiritual and the moral; every thing is so completely rested upon and carried back to purity of mind, that whatever else external or internal may happen to man, if he but strive earnestly and eagerly after this, all the rest falls back into shadow. Hence misfortune and every other sorrow loses a part of its oppressive influence, and at all events none of its *bitterness* remains. The infinite mildness of the whole New Testament doctrine, which figures God almost entirely on the merciful side, and in which the self sacrificing love of Christ for the human race, is everywhere brought forward; joined with the example which he himself has set us, alleviates like a healing balsam, every pain both of mind and body. In the Old Testament we do not find this, but there again appear, and always with more of comfort than terror, the omnipotence and omniscience of the Creator and Upholder of all things, raising us above our own individual sorrows by the grandeur of the representation.

## Letter LXV. p. 261.

You remark in your letter that before the appearance of Christ there had indeed been some intercourse between the Deity and certain privileged individuals, but that through Christianity, every one who is received into its bosom has attained a nearer relationship to the Highest of all beings. I consider this a particularly just observation. I am not indeed able to say what is to be understood by that nearer and more personal intercourse with God, which the Old Testament represents the patriarchs to have enjoyed. These narrations in the earlier books of Scripture, in whatever manner they may have originated, possess in every point of view so reverend a sanctity that we cannot allow room for any doubt of their truth; but it may remain, nevertheless, uncertain how much is to be allowed for the peculiar mode of representing and relating; how much for figurative, or for characteristic expressions. For in these old traditions which apparently must have been delivered down orally for many ages before they were written at all, it is often difficult to distinguish the true sense from the clothing in which it has been invested. It is however a certain and

consoling, as well as in the highest degree healing truth, that by means of Christianity all the blessings of religion have gained a universally beneficial influence, that all inward and outward privileges are done away with; and that every one may stand as near to God as the strength, the humility, and the sincerity of his spirit will enable him to approach. It is the peculiar character of Christianity that in every thing whether religious or moral, it takes away the dividing wall which formerly separated nations from each other, as if they were races of a different species; —removes the darkness which could imagine one nation privileged beyond others by the Deity, and embraces all mankind in one bond of love and duty to each other. Here figurative representations and wonderful events are no longer insisted on: here we have a spiritual communion which is the only one that man really needs, and at the same time that which by his faith and conduct he may always participate in. I confess too that I cannot join in the notion that there is, or can be now, any closer communion between God and individuals than that universal one which is conformable to the simple doctrine of Christianity, and which every one may enter into by means of holiness and

piety. It would be a dangerous sort of pride to fancy ourselves participators of any other and especial favour; neither does the human race need it. Holiness and purity of mind, and a due weighing of duty in our actions, or even the endeavour after the attainment of these on our own part,—for none reach them in their perfection,—are all that is needful to man, either singly or in societies; and all that is needful as we must suppose, to be well pleasing to the Highest of all beings.

LETTER LXVII. p. 269.

I do not love the winter, and from my childhood up have had no sense for the pretended beauty of a winter's day. The cold indeed I do not suffer from, because I never go out without being well guarded against it, and at home I can shut out the melancholy and uniform aspect of the snow by drawing the curtains. But then I feel more comfortable in a town where I see nothing of it from my apartment; though there the night only is beautiful, when the tumult in the common haunts of men ceases, and the starry heavens present us with the pure aspect of nature. By day it is only in the country that the view from a window affords pleasure. I had very

early this habit of confining my enjoyment of a town life to the night. Even as a young man I often sat within the whole day, unless I was in company,—and went out in the night only, when I paced the lonely streets for hours together, even in the hardest winter. I rejoice therefore that you have the same taste that I have for a starlight night. He who has not this taste loses a very great pleasure, and one of the purest and most exalted that there is. . . I allow nevertheless the justice of your remark that a winter's day has its pleasure too. The snow indeed is monotonous, but it is pure, and offers an emblem of a spotless life when it is fresh and untrodden. In Switzerland the white covering on the high mountains which the foot of man does not easily reach, is very beautiful. Your similitude of a winding sheet was new, and pleased me: but even if the snow be a winding sheet there is nothing displeasing in this thought. Nature lies during the winter in a deathlike insensibility, and if she, in her ever recurring course, brings a remembrance of death, it appears to the imagination and the mind only as a necessary change, —an unveiling of another and till then, scarcely anticipated state.

I must have expressed myself ill lately, to

make you suppose that I had in some measure combated the opinion that an all governing Providence regulates the affairs of men in every circumstance. According to my firm belief, man may depend on this divine government with the greatest certainty: it forms an essential attribute of the Creator and Maintainer of the World; it is confirmed by many passages both of the Old and New Testament; and is not only a sure and well grounded, but also a deep and consolatory truth which admits of no doubt: and you are certainly right when you say that the happy need this faith to prevent them from becoming presumptuous; those who are not happy to support them; and the miserable to save them from despondency. Even though every one thinks of this divine sympathy and care in his own way, these differences of individual views are unimportant. The main point remains always the same, namely, that an Infinite Wisdom, and Benevolence, regulates the whole order of things to which we belong; that our smallest as well as our greatest affairs are involved in this order, and that therefore all that happens must be good, and even if painful, beneficial to us; and finally, that his pleasure in us,—and where no equally wise ground for an exception arises,

his blessing on our undertakings or the contrary will depend on the integrity of our lives, and yet more upon the purity of our minds. Therein our opinions cannot differ. What I said related to your former letter, where you appear to assume that the Deity makes as it were a distinction between different men, and gives to some a severer schooling than to others. . . . It was only the notion that God would concern himself more for one person than another, that I opposed. Of course God may bestow his favour more on those who, by their greater devotion to him, show a deeper love, and more sincerity and purity of mind; but that he should make an unequal distribution of his guiding, caring, recompensing, and chastising superintendence, cannot be brought into accordance with the idea of his omnipotence or of his justice. In the Old Testament perhaps the expressions relating to God's elect may appear to have this sense; but those texts relate also in great part to the Jewish idea of God's chosen people; and then this election need not have an exclusive sense, but merely signifies that the elected are those who, by purity of heart, and sincerity of devotion, had made themselves the most worthy of his love, and had thus won his favour. In the New Testament

there is nothing which can give the least notion of any inequality of benevolent care in the dispensations of his Providence. If one or two passages have an appearance of this, it will be seen that they admit of a different interpretation: but the comforting thought pervades the whole, that God, even in sending adverse or painful circumstances, extends a loving care over us, and purifies while seeming to chasten.

## LETTER LXX. p. 282.

I agree in your opinion that the appointment of certain days of rest, even when they are not connected with any special religious festival, is a happy idea, and one that is in the highest degree gratifying and refreshing to the mind of every one who has a benevolent concern for all classes of his fellow creatures. There is nothing more heartless and selfish than the displeasure, or at least the sort of contemptuous distaste with which the noble and the rich sometimes look down on the rest of Sundays and festivals. Even the choice of the seventh day is certainly the wisest that could have been made. However arbitrary it may appear, and may be to a certain extent, to shorten or lengthen work on account of one day, I am nevertheless persuaded

that six days are the exact measure of man's physical power of endurance, whether in labour or uniform employment. There is something humane too in allowing the animals employed in man's service to share in his rest. To lengthen the time between this constantly recurring day of rest, would be no less foolish than inhuman: though I once saw the experiment made. When I spent some years in Paris during the time of the revolution, I witnessed there the abolition of this divine ordinance, in order to establish in its room the dull dry decimal system. The tenth day was to be what our Sunday is, and the work went on for nine days consecutively: but when this became evidently too much for the strength, many observed Sunday also; at least as far as the police would allow: hence resulted next, too much idleness, and thus we always blunder between two extremes when we depart from the regular middle way ordained for us. But if this be the case when merely rational and worldly considerations are taken into account, how much is its importance altered when seen in a religious point of view, which makes the idea as well as the enjoyment of the day a source of spiritual peace and real consolation. Besides this, the greater festivals are connected with such re-

markable circumstances, that they from thence gain an especial sanctity. It is doubtless the most proper celebration of these days, to read the history of the events which they commemorate in the bible itself, and all four Evangelists, as you tell me has been your practice for many years. In the Evangelists the general accordance of the narratives is as worthy of notice as the small differences which occur. This accordance is a pledge of their sincerity and truth, and all bear the stamp of the Spirit in which all these immediate witnesses wrote, who saw and accompanied Christ himself. But this spirit, although it indeed was a spirit of unity which animated all, did not at all hinder the peculiar character of every narrator from developing itself in all its genuineness and beauty. Indeed, whoever is accustomed to read the Evangelists frequently, cannot easily mistake from which of them a passage is taken, if it but contain any thing which allows character to show itself. I think I can perceive from your last letter, as I have thought I discovered also from former ones, that you give the preference to the gospel of St. John: . . . . I partake fully in your feeling: there is in John something peculiarly full of soul, if I may be allowed the expression. . . . By the peace which I

mentioned I mean that which is described in both the very well chosen texts which you quote: but I must understand them in my own sense. I must take both these texts together; for one alone does not express the idea I have connected with them, at least not entirely. In the first place if, as it is said in Isaiah "peace is the work of righteousness," it is unattainable without a severe fulfilment of duty: unattainable to every one, since strictness in the fulfilment of duty is its first and last condition. But this I should call, only an earthly, human kind of peace. It may be the groundwork, but it is not all. It is preached all through the prophets, and in the preceding parts of the Old Testament: but it is the New Testament which gives its completion. There alone we find the peace which the world cannot give:—an expression not to be surpassed. What belongs to this peace is quite distinct from any external good fortune or enjoyment: it is derived from an unseen power: but there must be that in the disposition which will separate our interior existence entirely from the world; which will prevent us from making any claim to outward good fortune; which seeks only that peace of the soul which results from a life spent in humble and sincere obedience; as a ship finds

rest on the still surface of a waveless and safe harbour. The mere practice of duty will not reach so far as this. The subordination of the individual to the law, and yet more, the recognition of the most exalted guiding and all-pervading love must be so powerful, that the whole being must be as it were merged in it. Only in such a frame of mind can we appropriate to ourselves the peace of mind promised by Jesus Christ: for it would be a very erroneous interpretation of this beautiful text, were we to believe that this heavenly peace would descend upon us of itself, without any effort on our part. It is a free heavenly gift flowing from divine grace only: but man cannot lay hold on it save by the state of mind which I have described: he cannot be a partaker of the heavenly whilst he is seeking earthly good. But let him possess such a mental disposition, and he is certain of this heavenly peace; for it is most true that "to him that hath will be given."—The earthly must, so far as its frail nature permits, put on the heavenly, if he would really be a partaker of it; and thus it is that our inward peace depends upon ourselves.

## Letter LXXIII. p. 303.

I determine on travelling very unwillingly, and never undertake it without a very good cause. It is not that I at all fear the inconveniences attending it, and as for the preparations, as I dislike the thing altogether so much that I cut them very short, so it is not on this account that I am annoyed by it: but it is the disturbance to my occupations which I feel. It is impossible to avoid a certain amount of doing nothing in travelling, or if not that exactly,—a sort of busy idleness. I avoid this, it is true, as much as I can, and even when I cannot go on with the same employment, I endeavour to take care at least that it shall only be a change, not a cessation of work. Occupation, in my mind, is as much a need as eating and drinking: even those who do nothing which a sensible man would call work, fancy at least that they are doing something: an idler, if even in his heart he means to remain such, does not tell the world so. There is however one employment, though of a different kind, which may be enjoyed while travelling: namely silent thought, which goes on without moving a finger, without reading and without writing. It is not indeed impossi-

ble to enjoy it at home, but very often business does not allow of it, and we can hardly attain it excepting in a lonely walk. I set a particular value upon it, and for this reason pass sleepless nights very willingly,—though this seldom happens to me except in illness, for I am a good and sound sleeper. Upon a journey it becomes almost necessary, and thus I can have my enjoyment with a clear conscience. . . . . It is certainly true that men in general do not allow themselves time enough for thought: they do anything rather than think, even when they are quite free from business; or when they have no higher demand on their time and attention, they give themselves up to mere empty nothings. The occupations of men are, unfortunately, for the most part such that they shut out all deep thought whilst they are going on, and yet make no ennobling claim on the mind: yet many have the folly to attach a value to these occupations, and even to pride themselves upon their diligence in them. This is clearly one of the reasons why the society of women has more of interest than that of men: for with them work and thought can go on together, and the true value both of intellect and feeling is better judged of.

## Letter LXXV. p. 313.

... I was very much interested in what you told me in your last letter about a French family, with whom you were formerly acquainted, and which has now returned to Germany. Your account of the young, newly married wife in particular, drew my attention, and she has evidently equally interested you. From all you tell me of her,—even though affection should have guided your pen, she must be a very delightful person. I wish you would tell me more, both of her and her family. As you know, I delight in tracing individual character, under every variety of aspect. It enriches our minds continually, when we can thus add a fresh figure to our gallery, whether we have seen it ourselves, or imagine it from description. I suppose, if I rightly understand you, that this is an emigrant family, which like others in the same situation, fled from the dangers which threatened them in their own country during the time of the revolution, and sought an asylum in Germany while awaiting a favourable change; then, when it occurred, returned to France, and now have come into your neighbourhood in the course of a pleasure trip.

When children have been among such emigrants, and have spent with us some of those years in which intellectual developement is justly considered to be the greatest, I imagine the influence of a German education, German customs, and German society, would not pass away unperceived. The young do not reject the habits of a foreign country with disgust: this is a piece of ill manners acquired later in life. In youth the strong contrast rather inclines to, than stands in the way of their adoption. It is however certainly true that from *one* circumstance the greater part of the French emigrants profited no more by their residence in Germany than if they had never set foot among us. In some families this extended to the children also, though again, in other cases, they have made good use of their German education. I know instances, indeed, of persons who have emigrated as children, who have become so naturalized and identified with every thing German, that they have remained with us altogether; and have even lost the power of expressing themselves with fluency in their native tongue. But such cases are rare; for the circumstance on which this variety of influence depends is the proficiency which these persons have made in

the German language, and the degree in which they have used it as an instrument in the higher parts of education and thought. What you said on this subject in your letter before the last, is exceedingly true and good. It is the native tongue which emphatically constitutes *home*. It is for this that we sigh, and the estrangement from home goes on most quickly and easily, though the most gently, through this. It is only some differences of climate that operate on the bodily frame, at least so it is with regard to the home sickness which affects the Swiss and other inhabitants of mountainous regions to a certain degree. One who is accustomed to the pure fresh air of the mountains cannot well endure that of the valley. Even its very breadth produces a feeling of confinement on account of the heavy damp atmosphere in which he has to move. Yet even in this case we perceive the power which the sounds received by the ear, if not positively the language of his country, have over the wanderer: for what is thus received makes a deeper impression on the mind than any thing received through the organs of sight. It is a known thing that nothing so much awakens the Switzer's longing for home as the peculiar series of modulations without any words, which compose the so-

called *Ranz des Vaches*, which is only to be heard in that country, but which has neither music nor melody in it.

To return to the French emigrants:—the influence of German manners and speech, where it has found place at all, has been greater amoug the men than the women. The boys and young men came not only more into communication with the educated classes, but they were frequently sent to German schools, gymnasia, and universities, where they carried on their studies in common with the natives: the girls, remaining more constantly with their still French parents, gained our language in a dead, artificial manner from a master, or picked it up merely from intercourse with the servants. By neither of these modes could it become a living language to them, or enable them to gain any thing beneficial from our modes of thinking and feeling; for I do hold it beneficial when we can blend in ourselves the individuality of more than one of the civilized nations of Europe. It destroys prejudices, but when rightly managed does not at all weaken our own peculiar character: it merely polishes off its rough corners, preserving at the same time, and the more firmly, all its genuine and truly noble parts.

## Letter LXXVIII. p. 326.

Tegel, October 8, 1827.

What say you to this splendid weather? It is impossible to let it slip by unnoticed. What I particularly like in our northern climates is, that the seasons are distinct from each other, and do not pass from one to the other with scarcely a difference. In the countries of the south it is not so: spring is not much distinguished from winter: it only forms the milder portion of it. But it is precisely the transit from the stiffness and dulness of the winter to the serene warmth of spring, that makes so deep and animating an impression on the heart. When we add to this the autumn through which nature must pass to the fetters of winter, the change and consequences of these seasons connect themselves with those great ideas which are always of most interest to man, i. e. the stiffening in death and the awaking to new life. What we see and feel around us, as well as the course of our interior thoughts, places this change and this passage to a new state in very different points of view: but there is nothing which rouses these thoughts more effectually than the natural change of seasons, the burying

of the seed in the bosom of its mother earth, its re-appearance from thence, and the many other appearances which afford symbols of this one great thought of nature, which only exists by being perpetually renewed. Were we but duly penetrated by this idea, our doings, our feelings, and our thoughts, would often take a very different direction from that which they now too frequently follow; for we should then feel that everything proceeds to the attainment of a certain ripeness, which is needful to the passing from a fettered and imperfect state, to one of freedom and perfection. For we cannot consider death, and the resurrection to a new life, as merely chance occurrences; or reckon them among earthly accidents. The departure from this life, be it early or be it late, certainly stands in immediate relation with the interior state of the departing being; and is always a sign that the Wisdom from whom nothing is hid, perceives that farther developement on this earth would not be advantageous. Thus death cannot have an equal operation upon all; and will not effect the same for him who remains behind, as for him who has ripened his mind, in this life, to a higher intellectual strength. Death, and a new life, can only be for those who are

already mature for the change. Man must seek to advance this ripeness in himself; for the ripeness of death, and that for the new life is one and the same. It consists in a separation from what is earthly; in an indifference to earthly enjoyments, and earthly activity; in a life in thoughts far removed from this world; in a casting off of anxious wishes for happiness here; in short in a state of mind which looks without anxiety to what may be our lot in this world, and only considers the end after which we are striving; which exercises fortitude and self-denial, and maintains a strict self-government. From hence arises the serene, fearless peace of mind, which needs nothing exterior, and which extends over our intellectual existence a heavenly brightness, like the unclouded blue of an earthly sky.

## Letter LXXX. p. 333.

... It is generally a prejudice when people imagine that a beautiful landscape is requisite to the enjoyment of nature. Undoubtedly this greatly enhances its attractions, but the pleasure we feel is not dependent on this. Natural objects themselves, even when they make no claim to beauty, excite the feelings and occupy

the imagination. Nature pleases, attracts, delights, merely because it is nature. We recognize in it an Infinite Power, greater and more effective than that of man, and yet not terrible; for a mild and beneficial influence seems to be extended on every object around us. Indeed the general character of nature is kind and good. When we talk of tremendous cliffs, and terribly sublime scenery, nature herself, nevertheless, is not to be feared. We soon become confident and at home among the wildest rocks, and feel that to the hermit who flies to her for shelter, she readily imparts tranquillity and peace . . . . . . The oppressed and melancholy state of mind which you mention distresses me . . . . I know and feel but too well that in a life not free from, but rather full of care, unpleasant, vexatious accidents, give rise to contradictions and disturbances which are painfully felt by a mind longing for, and needing quiet as yours does. But these states of mind, nevertheless, may be likened to clouds, which, as they pass, are sometimes bright and clear, sometimes dark and gloomy. We cannot always see whence they come, or whither they go; but the sun disperses them. The sun of the mind is the will; but when this is weakened it will not

suffice:—we have then need of faith. Faith only can raise us above our little daily life, and worldly business;—that only can give the soul a direction to higher things, and to objects and ideas which alone have value or importance. It bestows what certainly you have not failed to enjoy, and which you doubtless value far beyond all that is called happiness or good fortune,—I mean the peace of the soul. This is won and preserved in various ways, according to the variety in human affairs. He who lives in apparent happiness and even splendour, needs this peace to the full as much, as the wretch bending under misfortune; but he attains it with more difficulty: for this peace is a simple feeling which is hardly consistent with perplexing affairs. It is grounded chiefly no doubt on an untroubled and clear conscience, but it is not attained by that alone: we must be content with our lot, and be able to say calmly and truly that we have not murmured at it, but on the contrary have received it when prosperous, with humility, when adverse, with resignation and real confidence in God's wise government. As a difficult, perplexing situation enhances the merit of accommodating ourselves to it without complaint, or of freeing ourselves from it by

our own exertions, so we thus grow into better accord with our lot, whatever it may be. You, my dear friend, know and use all these aids already; you need only confidence in yourself, and in your power of exercising your natural strength of mind; and then you will certainly vanquish the heavy and depressing feelings you complain of.

## Letter LXXXVI. p. 358.

London, July 10, 1828.

I have attended the Church-Service here with my wife several times, but it appeared to me less edifying than with us. Two hours are consumed before the preaching begins, in reading passages from the Bible, saying the Creed, &c. At this reading, those who are nearest the altar, especially the children who receive instruction in religion, repeat the last words of every verse. This is of course very monotonous, and at length really wearisome. There is very little singing of the congregation, and as little of the organ; both music and singing are short, and quickly broken off. The sermon is short also, some half-hour or so. The one we heard was beyond measure cold, and by no means anything that could be called edifying; and I am told that this

is the tone and kind of preaching most usually heard. Then the arrangement of the church displeased me. Only one row of benches, about the fourth-part of the sittings, is free to all. The others are locked, but do not belong to individuals as with us, at least not all: but you see two women standing in the middle of the church with their faces towards the door, at least till the preaching begins. These women show every one who wishes for a seat into one of the locked pews, and receive when these persons quit the church, a trifling present; whether they keep, or whether they account for what they thus receive, I know not: but, at any rate, it goes against one to see two persons, during the greater part of the service, paying no attention to it, but altogether concerned with worldly affairs.

LETTER XC. p. 376.

. . . I see with pain that you are sad and full of care. In such states of mind, my dear friend, we must distinguish between the outward occasion, and the inward disposition to tranquillity and peace, or to anxiety and care. The inward feeling is always the strongest. Real, nay almost overpowering misfortunes are more or less heavy to bear, according as the mind employs

itself on cheering or depressing thoughts. It appears to me at present that you are suffering from these last, and I earnestly entreat you to fight against them. I reckon it even among these gloomy imaginations, that, without being ill, you believe that you are about to die. You say indeed, and no doubt with complete truth, that the thought of death is a joyful one to you, and one which accords with your inclination;—all which no one can better understand than I; for I have never had the least fear of death, and it would be welcome to me at any moment. I look upon it as what it is; the natural developement of life; one of those points at which under certain temporal conditions an already purified and exalted human being passes to a happier and brighter state.

## VOL. II.

### Letter I. p. 1.

Berlin, 1829.

YOUR letter reached me at a time that I may well reckon among the saddest of my life. My wife, whose declining state you know and feel for, is worse; and her state is such as to show more and more every day, that it can have but one termination. . . . At such moments, which belong to the most serious of a man's life, we must draw back into ourselves, and seek courage where the source of all fortitude, and all equanimity is to be found.

### Letter II. p. 2.

Berlin, March 31, 1829.

. . . I have experienced the deep grief which in my last letter I anticipated. My wife died early on the 26th of this month, and was yesterday buried at Tegel. She had suffered a four month's confinement to her chamber, and endured much, though tolerably free from sharp pain. Her even, cheerful disposition, which was alike prepared for death or life, never forsook her:—her last hours were peaceful, quiet, and

altogether without pain. She retained her senses to the last, and spoke in a firm and unmoved voice to her two elder daughters, and to me. The nearer the approach of death, the more peaceful and contented was the expression of her features; not the slightest convulsion deformed her countenance. Her death was a gradual passing into a deep sleep.

## Letter III. p. 4.

Berlin, May 18, 1829.

I wrote to you a short time since of the death of an intimate friend, in whom I have lost much. The flowers of spring are now already blossoming upon his grave, as well as that of my wife. Thus nature follows its everlasting course, and seems to care nothing for the human race which is daily passing away in the midst of it. Let even the most heart-rending circumstances occur, be they immediate consequences of its usual events, or of its extraordinary revolutions, still it follows its path with iron indifference, and apparent apathy. When a person is already shaken by the grief of a recent, or the dread of an impending misfortune, this has in it something which rather augments our inward suffering, something that chills and alarms us: but in pro-

portion as our view extends itself farther, in proportion as the mind collects its powers enough to take a general survey of things; in proportion, too, as we return to that rationality and submission which alone are worthy of our intellectual part, then we perceive in the immutable course of Nature, always following fixed laws, something infinitely consoling and tranquillizing. There is something here, then, that does not change; "an immoveable pole amid the circling course of appearances," as Schiller beautifully expresses it in one of his poems. Man, then, belongs to a great and immutable order of things; and as this certainly leads to something higher, and finally to a point at which all doubts will be explained, and all difficulties made plain; when all the involved and apparently discordant laws will at last unite into one mighty diapason;—so must he, too, proceed with it to this same point. The character, moreover, which is impressed upon nature is always so gentle a one, that the finest feelings cannot be wounded by it. The tranquillity, the joy, the splendour which she spreads around; the magnificence and grandeur in which she clothes herself, have nothing in them either of pretension or of haughtiness to repulse us. However

deep may be the affliction, the mind nevertheless opens itself willingly to the feelings awakened by the numberless flowers of the renewed year, the joyful twitter of the birds, the splendour of the objects touched by the still brightening and strengthening sun, as he goes forth in his might. Grief then assumes the form of a gentle melancholy, which is not a stranger to a certain peace and sweetness even. If, finally, we regard nature as not really all, merely the bond between the spiritual and corporeal world; if we take it as the operation of matter and its forces, acting in obedience to the Creator, then it is the earthly shell only of man that belongs to it; himself, his higher and proper existence, steps beyond its bounds, and associates itself to another and nobler order of things. You will see from this, nearly, how I am influenced by the slowly approaching, yet beautiful Spring; how I enjoy it; and how it mingles with all my deepest feelings. It may give you, at the same time, a picture of those feelings. I am incapable of really joyful impressions just now; I experience only melancholy and sad ones; and when I say "just now," it is only because I never like to say any thing of the future, and because I have always been free from affectation; and if a really joyous

mood were to return, I should never think of concealing it, nor have any scruple in abandoning myself to it. But, in fact, I believe that my present feelings will continue unchanged. I have never been able to comprehend how time can lessen the grief for the loss of a friend: the privation continues through all time, and the alleviation can only consist in two things; either that the remembrance of the loss grows weaker, or that the feeling of solitariness leads us to unite ourselves more closely with some other person; both of which, I trust, will always be far from me, as they must be from all well constituted minds. But my present state is the right one for me; I have never found my happiness in gaiety, or my unhappiness in sadness; nor have I ever considered what men usually call good or ill fortune as affording a cause for complaint, if I experienced the latter instead of the former. I have lived with my wife through a long course of years, in infinite happiness, which, for the most part, was conferred by her, or at any rate so far, that she, and the thought of her, had a part in every thing which really afforded me pleasure. All this happiness the course of nature, and the decree of heaven has taken from me,—has taken it wholly, and with-

out a possibility of its return. But the remembrance of the deceased,—all that she, and the living with her, has developed in me, no fate can take away without annihilating my individuality. Happily there is something in man that he can hold fast if he will, and over which fate has no power. If I can live henceforth undisturbed in my solitude, with these remembrances for my companions, I shall neither complain nor hold myself unhappy: for a man may experience great and deep grief, and yet not be for that reason unhappy; since he feels it to be so bound up with his very life that it can never be separated from him, but, on the contrary, is then best fulfilling his true destination, when he cherishes and preserves it in his heart. The memory of the past has an infinite virtue in it, for even when it gives rise to painful feelings, it affords nevertheless an inexpressible enjoyment. We retire in thought with the object of our affection, now no more; but we can also turn freely and cheerfully to exterior things; can be active and helpful to others, but for ourselves we need nothing else; since we have all within ourselves that the heart is now capable of feeling. When we lose what has been as it were the moving principle of the best and most

thoughtful part of ourselves, a new epoch of life begins. The past is closed, and may be reviewed as a whole, and by the force of the memory it may be so held fast in the mind that we can continue to live in it; but we have now no wishes for the future, and as we enjoy, by means of this remembrance, a constant spiritual proximity, and find all our natural powers increased and exalted by it, so life, without which these feelings could have no existence, has still its charms. My enjoyment of the beauties of nature is by no means weakened; it is men only that I avoid, because solitude is needful to my mind.

## LETTER IV. p. 9.

You see by my letters that I am tranquil and collected: I live, and shall live, year by year, only more exclusively in the thoughts of the past,—in that happiness which the present gives no longer. I am rich in these thoughts, and am so far content, that I feel this to be exactly the sort of happiness which befits this period of my life. In this world, I look to nothing but these recollections for reward, comfort, or peace of mind. I require nothing, I ask for nothing, on this side the grave. To my chil-

dren I am the same as before: nothing is changed in my feelings towards them, excepting that I sympathize with their grief for our common loss: more closely knit to them, more careful for them than I have always been, I cannot be. All remaining connections continue to be to me just what they were: I am certainly not less interested in them, not less kind, not less willing to assist them by word and deed, than formerly. . . . What I experience is but the natural course of things: those who tread life's path together must separate at some point; happiest when the interval is very short before the survivor may follow:—and, in any case, parting for a few years is little, compared with eternity.

P. 13. I am very glad that you do not cease to occupy yourself willingly and perseveringly with the contemplation of the stars. The impression which the mere sight of the heavens produces on the soul is so different, both in regard to feelings and ideas, from that of the earth, that he who finds pleasure in the study of this globe only, loses half, and that the most important half, of the whole aspect of nature. I do not by this mean to say that the Creator shows himself greater, wiser, more wonderful,

or more benevolent, in the firmament than in the mere surface of the earth. His power, wisdom, and goodness, shine forth in every being, as much as in the greatest of the heavenly bodies. But the sky acts more immediately on the soul; awakening a purer, loftier, deeper-searching, less selfish, and less sensual tone of feeling.

## LETTER VII. p. 26.

When we look at this world merely, [i. e. without any views beyond] the individual is lost in the shadow of two powerful obtruding masses, or rather is hurried onwards by a mighty stream. At least this impression is made when we contemplate the sequence and connection of all worldly events, and when at the same time we see the constant succession of life unceasingly renewed upon the earth. What is the individual amid the stream of worldly events? He disappears in it, not merely as an atom when opposed to an immense irresistible force, but also in a higher, nobler sense. For this stream does not roll on, abandoned without design to a blind chance, but hastens on towards an appointed end, and its course is guided by an all-wise and almighty hand. But the individual does not

live to see the end that is to be attained;—he enjoys it, however, whenever chance—by which term I here understand a dispensation of heaven whose grounds are not within reach of our investigation—whenever chance, I say, brings before him a greater or less portion of what is already accomplished; he is often sacrificed to the accomplishment of yet more, and must often suddenly leave his appointed work in the midst of his labours. He is then only a tool, and appears to be not even an important one, since, when the course of nature sweeps him away, he is immediately replaced; and it would be against all reason to suppose that the great designs of Omnipotence could be retarded for a moment by the fate of one weak individual. . . . As long as we look on mankind singly, one man appears to differ greatly from another;—they differ in activity, in health, in duration of life; but if we look at a number of generations, they all resemble each other. In every century the human race is renewed about three times; in any given number, about as many, upon an average, die at the same age. In short, it is clearly to be seen that the fore-calculated regulation relates rather to the masses,—rather to the whole race,—than to the individual; and whatever we may say,

however deeply and firmly we may be persuaded that these things are ruled by an all-wise and all-good Being, yet nothing goes so much against the feeling of the individual, on occasions when it is painfully excited, as this regardless casting back of the sensitive being into a mere mass of natural life. Hence it was so provoking when a cold calculation was made, shortly after the French revolution, that the number of persons sacrificed on the scaffold were but few as compared with the whole population of France. . . . . These views which I have called those of this world merely, so swallow up the individual existence, that, since we cannot deny their intrinsic truth, the soul would sink into desolate and helpless sorrow were not the inward and consoling persuasion firmly established, that God so directs both the course of events and that of nature, that, taking into account also the future supra-mundane existence, the happiness and the being of the individual are not only not sunk in them, but, on the contrary, grow and thrive. True peace and comfort, or rather that feeling which requires no comfort, first arises in the mind when we abandon this worldly view altogether, and look at

nature and the world from the side where the Creator's aim also is visible. HE could not have called man into life but for his individual benefit: HE could not have given him over to the blind changes of certain laws of organism, nor sacrifice him to some ideal object, still far remote, or to the continuous course of the universe, high above and beyond him, whose bounds and form he never has it in his power to contemplate. Every one created to take his part in life is intended to be happy; happy, that is, in that deep and spiritual sense, in which happiness means an inward happiness grounded on the fulfilment of duty, and on love. In this sense the Deity guides, and loves him, and vouchsafes him his protection. In the individual man lies the whole aim, and importance of life, and with this the course of natural events is brought into harmony. Nowhere is this fatherly care of God for the happiness of each, individually, so truly and comfortingly set forth as in Christianity, and in the New Testament. It contains the simplest, yet the most touching, and the most deeply heart-moving expressions concerning it.

## Letter X. p. 43.

Tegel, December 24, 1829.

I have never written to you from hence so late in the year as this. . . . It was only in earlier, happier days of my life that I spent the winter in the country; and what I then did in cheerful company, I now repeat alone. This is the course of human things. It was exceedingly cold to-day, yet I was out notwithstanding. I walk every day at the time that I can see the sun set. I do not willingly miss that moment, and the half-hour before and after is to me, both in summer and winter, the time I like the best in the whole day. . . . Though I always loved contemplative tranquillity, even when I was thrown amid the press of men and the turmoil of affairs, my present loneliness plunges me yet more into it. I have no inclination for any thing else. My scientific pursuits are congenial with it, and I feel more and more every day, how much pure and reasonable reflection on our own nature, harmonizes our inward being, and gives that peace which indeed is always the work of God, but which, nevertheless, according to His clearly declared will, man must not expect as an outward gift from Him, but on the contrary

must derive it from himself by a resolute exertion of his own will. I have in every period of my life, felt very composed respecting the moment which must call us hence again; and I am doubly so now, when, bereft of what every instant afforded me the greatest happiness, I have returned to the cold realities of life. I think, too, that I may say with tolerable certainty, that I shall spend the years which may possibly be yet appointed to me, as I have the few last months. Very important events alone could bring about any real alteration; for in lesser matters, I should easily so arrange things that the change should be apparent only. I look on my life, henceforth, as a continuation and completion of the past; but this sort of feeling does not lead me to occupy myself with speculations on death, and a future state, but rather with thoughts which belong to this life. Nor do I hold this to be any peculiarity in me; for I believe it must generally be so. The recommendation to think on death, is meant only to meet that levity which looks on this life as an ever-enduring gift. A contemplative disposition is, by its very nature, free from this levity; and farthermore, I am not sure that to dwell incessantly on the idea of death, and of what is to

follow, is wholesome for the soul. I ought not to deny it absolutely, since it is more a concern of feeling than an enquiry founded on reason and argument, but I do not believe that it is.

The conviction,—arising from a firm confidence in Almighty goodness and justice,—that death is only the termination of an imperfect state of being, whose purpose cannot be fully carried out here; and that it is the passage to a better and a higher condition, should be so constantly present to us, that nothing should be able to obscure it, even for a moment: it is the groundwork of inward peace, and of the loftiest endeavours, and is an inexhaustible spring of comfort in affliction. But to paint to ourselves our possible future state, so as in imagination to live in it, only draws us away from real life, and sets something apparently better in its stead, whose objects are indeed more exalted than those which man usually pursues, but which, when we seek after, we find unattainable. God has clearly shown that he disapproves such a mode of employing our thoughts, since he has drawn an impenetrable veil over the future state, and has left every one of us utterly ignorant as to when the moment of departure shall overtake him: a sure proof that the living belong to life,

and should give their attention to its concerns. For this reason, also, the consciousness that I am approaching the closing period of mine, warns me that there is still an exertion to be made, an effort to give the finishing hand to life, and to mould the inward man into a complete whole. To be placed in a position to be able to do this, by not being cut off amid the full bustle of the world, but to have an interval of rest and quiet, is a bounty of Providence which ought not to be neglected. I do not mean by this that any fresh work is to be undertaken, or completed even. What I have in my mind every one can do, in every condition. I mean that the work should be *within*, that the feelings should be brought into perfect harmony, so that the individual shall be able to stand alone, independent of outward influences, and shall fashion himself to be always what he might suppose himself to be in his most peaceful and spiritual state of mind. Every one, however much he may have laboured, is still very distant from this point; for the work requires a longer time than perhaps the longest duration of life will afford. This, however, I consider to be the real aim of life: this it is which continues always to give it value, and if any misfortune,—

such as every one, however happy he may seem, is liable to,—were to bring me to the point of no longer estimating aright the value of this great object, I should blame myself much, and endeavour as soon as possible to eradicate so wrong a feeling. It is only such a life-long aim as this which can make the brooding over our own thoughts not altogether unfruitful. Only we must let them take the direction given by that principle in the soul, which, as occasion offers, judges, approves, and corrects. Life is an outward occupation, an actual *work*, in all ranks and all situations. It is not, however, exactly this occupation or this work itself which is of such great value, but it is the thread by which better things, namely, our thoughts and feelings, are connected, or along which they run. It is the ballast without which the ship would have no steadiness on the waves. It is chiefly in this light that I consider my scientific pursuits. They are peculiarly adapted to this end, since they necessarily stand in connection with ideas. I have been thus diffuse, in order to give you a conception of what I call my loneliness, and my enjoyment in it. It was not originally of my own choosing, but has been the result of accident. The survivor of a pair is

emphatically *alone*, and it is then a natural and a commendable feeling to prefer for the future to remain alone. This solitude, too, favours that self-contemplation, that work, that harmonizing of life, of which I just now spoke. Finally, our studies are to be added, to which also we must give their proper place. On this account, I very seldom go into the city to my children, but I am delighted when they come here. My acquaintance at first deplored my absence;—that was courtesy: then they found out that this retirement was natural at my age, and in my situation;—that is truth. Weariness of life,—insensibility to its enjoyments,—a wish that it were ended,—these have no share in my solitude.

## Letter XI. p. 48.

I am anxious to know how you are, and if you have regained the tranquillity and cheerfulness I so much wish you. Still happier shall I be if my sympathy and counsel have indeed been instrumental towards it. But what is really and properly essential to it you must yourself do. For it is a very true saying, that man's happiness lies within himself. The joys which Heaven bestows on him only make him

happy when they are rightly used, and the bitterness and sorrow which fate may allow him to experience, it is in his own power greatly to alleviate.

In such cases also as admit of no consolation, —for certainly such do exist,—God has permitted us to experience a melancholy which is a sort of medium between happiness and misery, between pleasure and pain. A feeling is produced by grief which we cannot abandon, to which we cling, which we yield ourselves up to with the consciousness that it is not hurtful, but that it purifies, ennobles, and raises us. It is a great thing when man can acquire a disposition to struggle against all that may befall him, merely because it is human, and is in the course of earthly events; or so to receive it as may best bring it into unison with the destination of man, always to unfold and mature more and more the resources of his being. The sooner we can arrive at this frame of mind, the happier it is for us; we can then first say that we have had actual experience of life. We are sent into the world that we may learn truly to live, and it is only what we have wrought into our character during life that we can take away with us. It is a great happiness when all our thoughts

and feelings are settled in one object: we are then constantly in security; we covet nothing more from fortune, nothing more from men; we are indeed beyond the reach of receiving anything from them but satisfaction in their happiness; neither can we fear anything for the future; we cannot alter what is unalterable, but the *one thing*, the attachment to one thought, one feeling, even when, through the saddest blow we can receive, it has become an attachment to a remembrance only, *that* ever abides with us. Whoever has attained to this calm attachment to one thought, possesses everything, because he needs and longs for nothing else. Still more tranquillising and blessed, of course, is such an attachment to one idea, when that one is not earthly, but divine; but even such a true, soul-absorbing earthly attachment to one object is necessarily directed to what, even in the earthly, is not *of the earth*. For that which is merely earthly is incapable of so raising the soul above itself. The only touchstone of the genuineness of this feeling is, that, free from all disquiet, mixed with no sort of desire, it seeks nothing, asks nothing, knows no other wish than that such as it is now it may continue. Hence it is that the affection for the dead is a

feeling so sweet, so pure, so devoted to those wishes only which can continue unaltered through eternity, that the soul by indulging it grows stronger, till, amidst a sweet sadness, it is able to cherish it unremittingly. When the affections are directed to what is divine, they become indisputably the purest and most refined from all earthly mixture. They have, withal, this peculiarity, that they do not estrange us from the earth, yet they take the sting and the bitterness from all that is threatening or sorrowful in its events. The recollection of the dead being connected with everything that surrounded them when living, they themselves, instead of being removed, form a still further connecting link with life, and thus, in every situation, there are still objects with reference to which we think of the dead as sympathizing in, and as still bound up with, mortal existence. These thoughts, too, still bind the survivors to this life, but it is a connection which takes from life its burden, since we consider ourselves no longer as wholly belonging to it. When our fondest affections are all on the other side the grave, when nothing is left here that can be put in the balance against them, then that which we were formerly accustomed to fear, appears

nothing peculiarly formidable to one armed against earthly vicissitude. Time and eternity unite in the soul to produce a calm which henceforth nothing can disturb. I always thought this must be so, before I had experience of it. I have never considered it to be possible that a merely apparent compensation could be given us for a real loss. I find it actually so, now that the lot has fallen to me. Yes, I am sensible, with great delight, that the true and right effect which such a lot must have, is constantly developing itself farther; just as the natural night grows deeper the longer it endures. The pleasure which we have in the darkness of night, and of which I have always been peculiarly susceptible, is akin to this impression. We are alone, and wish to remain alone. We perceive nothing outwardly, and within us there is stirring a twofold life. The daylight has been, and the daylight will return.

### Letter XII. p. 55.

Tegel, March 17, 1830.

My health continues good; that is, I am free from all small evils, and with regard to my eyes I perceive no change: but I do not deceive myself: when once the sight begins to be weak-

ened or obscured it is in the nature of things that this, like all else, should take its course. But the progress of this gradual darkening is so slow that it may not come to any serious evil while I live . . . . You are right about the difficulty which my hand causes me in writing: this is a usual accompaniment of advanced age. . . . . Age appears gradually as our years increase; but after a severe illness, or an irreparable loss it comes on suddenly: and this last is my case. Had I not suffered the loss I have experienced, I might yet have continued many years as I was; but the great change which this loss necessarily produces, and which I become more sensible of every day; the sudden loneliness after eight and thirty years of companionship; and even the absence of that thought and feeling in common, which had, till then, been uninterrupted, must necessarily be felt in the body no less than the mind. However, this is not hard to bear, especially while my general health remains firm, as it is at present. I can therefore only abide by what I have said, however little you may sometimes agree in the sentiment, that old age is pleasing to me. It is a natural human condition to which God has given its own peculiar feelings, each of which has too

its peculiar pleasure. If by means of a magic wand I might have the power either to pass my yet remaining years in youthful strength and vigour, or to remain as I am now, I certainly should not choose the first. The strength and freshness of youth do not accord with grey-headed feelings; and these feelings sought and won in the course of a long life, I would not give up for any thing on earth. What you say of my disposition I subscribe to, in so far as it is certainly a rare gift of Heaven, and one that calls for the deepest and most earnest thankfulness, and is no matter of human merit. I do not take the slightest credit to myself for it, I am chiefly indebted for it to her who is even now its immediate source: for when we have lived long by the side of a thoroughly pure and great character, it is as if an influence from it had passed over us—I should appear to myself unworthy of this possession, if I could now do other than live inwardly in perfect peace in the remembrance of it; and outwardly, as opportunity may offer, be usefully and benevolently employed.

LETTER XIII. p. 60.

. . . . It only requires to have a disposition to enjoy them [i.e. the natural changes of dark-

ness and light] and that is in every man's power. All the things which surround us contain in themselves matter for contemplation, for enjoyment, and for delight, both for the mind and feelings, which is wholly different from and independent of the peculiar destination and physical uses of any of them. The more we abandon ourselves to the pursuit of it the more does this deeper sense—this meaning which belongs half to the natural object, and half to us who find it—open upon us. Let us only, for instance, look at the clouds. In themselves they are nothing but shapeless mist, the consequence of moisture and warmth; yet how, when viewed from the earth, do they enliven the sky with their forms and colours, and how many fancies and feelings do they give rise to in the mind.

### Letter XIV. p. 63.

I have received your letter with double pleasure on account of the calm and cheerful tone in which it is written. I wish for nothing more than that you may continue in the same or a corresponding frame of mind: and you may certainly do so, if you do not encourage gloomy and erroneous ideas, but rather endeavour after that peace which may render the soul inde-

pendent of outward events. Without this peace, which must be acquired for ourselves by inward endeavour, we remain always the sport of fate, and lose or gain our internal equilibrium as our outward condition has more of joy or of sorrow.

## Letter XV. p. 69.

. . . You speak of storms in your letter: we have had many here (at Ottmachan) but, thank God! without doing any damage. From my childhood up I have been free from all fear of storms: the sight of a very timid person in our family I believe either cured me of, or warned me against it. But on the other hand I cannot say that I have ever shared in your wish to be struck and killed by lightning. To the imagination there is certainly something imposing, in being as it were removed by heaven itself: but as it happens, the lower cloud region from whence storms proceed belongs very much to earth, and is less unknown than the earth is. That fire which is nourished by nothing on earth, is certainly the purest element, and the death by lightning, when immediate, may be a happy one; for it appears to be wholly without pain. But last year a case occurred here in which a man actually struck by lightning did

not die till the following day. He was an old invalid. He fell down senseless, but his senses returned, and he seemed unhurt and well: but on the following day derangement of brain showed itself, which carried him off in a few hours. But such cases are rare. I should not wish so sudden a death for myself; but we know so little about the matter that I commit that to Heaven: I would not even have the appearance of causing a sudden removal from earth, were it only by a wish. We come into the world so wholly without remembrance or consciousness, that it is well worth the trouble to leave it at least, with a clearer knowledge. It seems to me as if we did not know the whole of life unless death is in some measure included in the circle of our knowledge. As I now think on the subject it would be my endeavour to observe only the present moment, and to hold myself as free as possible from all thoughts of the past and the future: but no man can say what power he will have over himself at that moment. In a circumstance which we experience but once, no man can answer for himself. The timid may become courageous, the bold, cowardly. Nor can any previous thought much alter the case, since we do not know what we have to prepare

against. *Death* is nothing but a word: only our own experience can tell us what that word really means. The sight of the dying does little towards it, for what we see in them precedes death. When that arrives *we* see nothing but the stiff unconsciousness, but whether it really be so for them, or whether they do not awaken from it till a later period, and in a different condition; these are questions which we may wish to have answered, but which it is impossible to satisfy from experience.

That is a beautiful passage in your last letter, in which you say that you look upon life as a coffer, in which we may store up all that is really valuable in our inward selves. Man may make life what he pleases, and give it as much worth, both for himself and others, as he has energy for. Of course this must be understood only in a moral and spiritual sense; for we do not hold outward circumstances in our power; and it is only over our intellectual and moral being that we can rule: but over this our sway is complete. On this account,—if we can but bring ourselves to think calmly,—life has truly an inestimable value, even under the most unpleasant circumstances. It is my firm conviction that man has only himself to blame if his

life appears to him at any time void of interest and of pleasure.

### Letter XVI. p. 75.

You speak of a longing after peace, dear Charlotte. Certainly we cannot say that we can obtain it for ourselves, and least of all that it is attainable under all circumstances. But we can do much towards it. I too have not always possessed the calmness and equanimity which you commend in me, and I know full well how great a struggle it has often cost me to attain it. I abide in my simple conviction that the being happy, and the feeling so inwardly, is no gift of fortune, and does not reach us from without. If we mean it to be durable we must win it for ourselves by a hard struggle; and this is consoling: for if so, we can always thus win it. To be always, or for the most part fortunate in our outward circumstances, always well, rich, successful to our wish, even God himself could scarcely grant us in this life; for with the greatest wisdom he has subjected man to the conditions of earthly existence, and these will not always permit it. But he can always make us inwardly happy, for he has placed in our hearts all that is requisite for it—i. e. elevation

of our wishes towards him, admiration of him; love to him, confidence in him; all the feelings in short by means of which his peace rests upon us.

## Letter XVIII. p. 89.

Tegel, September 7, 1830.

... You mention the late tumults. Since you wrote they have increased and drawn nearer to us. It is grievous to see how passion, the wild rudeness of one class, and the arrogance of another, all threaten the peace which we have so long enjoyed. However things will get quiet again. The affairs of the world are always in a state of ebb and flow, changing unceasingly, and this mutability must be God's will, since he has not bestowed either power or wisdom to arrest it, and bring things to a stand still. The great lesson to be learned on such occasions is that we should redouble our efforts to fulfil our duties, and do what is right: and that we must seek our happiness and inward peace in other things, which cannot be taken from us.

## Letter XX. p. 99.

... Once more to return to the selection of a simple employment which may tranquillise

your mind. I am not sure that such a large apparatus as R——'s is needful for the intellectual exercise which I recommended: at least I did not think so when I wrote to you. For this exercise freedom is especially requisite, and that is crushed by such a load of reading. I should think quite a contrary process simpler and better. Why *must* we know and learn so much?—It is far better and more beneficial, to read and think: that is, to read merely for the sake of matter to think about; because thought must have some object, some thread which may give it connection and sequence; and for this purpose we need only to take up any book that comes to hand, and can lay it aside again for any other. If this be done for some weeks, a person must be quite wanting in intellectual vigour and activity, if ideas do not arise of themselves which he will wish to pursue farther; or things which he desires to know more about; and then he enters upon a study of his own choice, not one imposed upon him by another. This is what I think I have seen done by all the women who lead any thing like an active intellectual life.

## Letter XXII. p. 107.

... A new year is always an epoch, which induces me to collect my thoughts within myself. I look over what I have done and might have done, I take counsel with my feelings, approve or blame, fortify myself in my old designs, make new ones, and so generally bring the first day of the year idly and unemployed to its close. I smile at myself, that I commence my good designs with idleness, but it is really not so much idleness as leisure; and this is sometimes wholesomer than labour. But the point to which these periodical meditations always return is the pleasure that another year of life is closed. This is not from any anxiety for death, for this I have not; because life and death, unalterably connected together, are but developements of the same being; and it would be inconsiderate and childish to wish to alter or delay the moral and physical maturity appointed to all men. Still less is it from the slightest weariness of life. I had the same feeling in my happiest days, and now that I am no longer susceptible of pleasure from without, but live quietly in myself and my recollections, I can still less have any quarrel with life. But the lapse of time has something in it

delightful to me: time does not flow on emptily;—it brings, and takes, and leaves behind: through it we become continually richer, not exactly in enjoyment, but in something higher. I do not mean by this mere dry experience;—no,—it is an elevation to a greater clearness of perception, and a fuller self-knowledge: what our nature is capable of, we are more thoroughly;—and we more clearly comprehend why it is capable of so much, and will be of yet more. And this being the centre point of the present and future being of man, is the highest and the most important to him.

LETTER XXIII. p. 114.

... Did you seriously dread the past year, and feel such anxious forebodings respecting it, or do you say so half in jest? It seems to me strange to conceive any expectations, whether confident or disquieting, from a thing so wholly beyond our calculation and judgment as the commencement of a year. Still less can I comprehend how mere numbers can be looked upon by any persons as ominous and foreboding. Nevertheless I have here and there found instances of such persuasions: but I hold it very important to keep ourselves free from these im-

pressions; and therefore if in an unguarded moment any such should take possession of the mind, we should remove it as soon as possible. It has not been found suitable to the plans of the Almighty that the future should be laid open clearly to our view: had He willed otherwise he would not have given dark and mysterious intimations and signs, but would have allowed the spiritual eyes of man to pierce through the concealing veil. Forgive me for making these observations; perhaps they are unnecessary; but it is from a true interest in you that I wish you to spare yourself these apprehensions, arising only from dark anticipations, and for which on cooler and calmer consideration there is absolutely no ground. You will tell me that a person of quick and strong feelings cannot consider coolly and calmly. You are right if you mean to include among the feelings those objectless impressions on the mind which, for instance, lead to apprehensions respecting this or that period of life: but these should be repressed by a strong effort of the will. The feeling, on the contrary, which embraces a real object with depth and force, is no impediment to the calmest and coolest reflection, but rather gives it a higher aim. It is exactly among the women

who have been capable of feeling all the emotions of friendship and love the most deeply, that I have always found the best directed reflection, the clearest judgment, and the firmest self-government.

P. 119. ... Thank you for reminding me of Gellert—at one period of my life, notwithstanding the absence of all poetry in his verses, I liked his writing much. I have not his works, and do not remember the passage you quote, but I do remember one in what I think he calls "Evening Self-examination"—It either begins with or has in it,—"The day is again departed, and how have I employed this portion of life. Has it passed over me in vain?" Often and often on retiring to bed these words have occurred to me. . . . .

You would not surely wait for sanctification from above without doing anything towards it yourself; and I would as little presume to think that I could work it out without the blessing of God. But yet more lies in this than I have said, for we must not only act, but we must do so with the same confidence and resolution which we should do if we were convinced that the result rested wholly with ourselves. At

first sight there appears a contradiction in striving after what is not dependent on ourselves, but rests in the hands of an exterior power: but the problem is solved, it appears to me, when we combine zeal and fervour of endeavour with an humble feeling of the intrinsic insufficiency of all earthly powers. When earnest endeavour and humility are combined, the result is certain.

### Letter XXV. p. 128.

. . . What is poetry? you ask; and you add 'I think that this must be a matter of feeling:' —I am quite of your opinion. He who really feels (for after all it can only be so judged of) that a thing is poetical, does not need an explanation; and he who has no feeling for it, cannot be helped by all the explanations in the world. Schiller who had the art of clothing his feelings and thoughts in words, more than most people, has done it as far as was possible, but examples do it better. Take two contemporary writers whose works you are well acquainted with;—Gellert and Klopstock. They may be compared with one another because both have handled the same sort of spiritual subjects, both were animated by the same exalted piety

and pure love of virtue, and finally both exercised a great influence on their age; but you will certainly be of my opinion that Klopstock's ideas take a higher flight, that his writings call forth more thought and take us more out of ourselves. Gellert's verses are rhymed prose: Klopstock had throughout a poetical nature.

### Letter XXVII. p. 136.

June 2, 1831.

You speak in your letter of the value of life, and express an opinion that the enfeebled strength of age diminishes this. If you allude to its value as far as enjoyment is concerned, I willingly acknowledge that it cannot always be set very high. Nay, I even hold that at my age I can expect little or nothing that is satisfactory in all that is likely to happen from this time forward; for in all that regards the outward condition of the world, the prospect is overcast, ideas are perplexed amid the most discordant opinions, and the years which I may yet have to live will not suffice to disentangle them. But is it right or allowable to measure the worth of life like that of any other possession? God has given life to man in order that he may employ it in a way pleasing to Him, and conformable to

duty; and that he may be happy in the consciousness of so doing. It is undoubtedly given us for our happiness. But happiness has always this condition attached to it, that, whether at first, or when longer days have brought their trials with them, we shall find it only in the practice of duty and self-command. I therefore never ask myself what value life has for me: I endeavour to fill it well, and leave the rest to Providence. The diminution which our powers sustain as age advances, I know full well by my own experience; but I cannot on that account retract what I lately wrote to you, namely, that the proper aim of life is to increase to the utmost the mental capacity of the individual, according to the circumstances he is placed in, as well as to the length of life and power of knowledge granted him. Certainly there are cases where age destroys all the mental powers, as was the case with Campe, who merely vegetated during the last five years of his life. But these cases, happily, are rare. The common debility of age belongs more to the body, and the soul retains its strength of resolution, quickness, and perseverance, its memory, and liveliness of interest in outward circumstances. The thinking and mental powers remain, in most cases

not only unimpaired, but they are clearer, and less obscured by delusions and passions: and these are exactly the powers which best and most securely lead to the above-mentioned ripeness of judgment. During that later period of life in which we no longer set up any claim to success in fortune, or change of situation, they weigh most accurately the true value of things and actions, and connect the end of our earthly existence with the hope of a higher; while they purify the soul by the calm and impartial examination of what has previously happened to it in life. No one should believe that he will soon finish this quiet self-review: the more perseveringly we pursue it, the more new matter developes itself. I do not mean by this an unfruitful brooding over ourselves: we may indeed in this way, live both with the present and the past in our thoughts; but if we do so, which is by no means necessary, I do not on that account imply that the materials for reflection are to be drawn wholly from the circle of worldly affairs, but from that higher sphere to which man chiefly belongs in his later years. For this double sphere is evidently assigned to man: —in the one he is actively employed, and contributes his share to the greatest as well as the

smallest of human events; yet he never sees the end of them, and is himself not the object, he is only an instrument, a link in the chain;—*his* thread of life frequently breaks at the most critical moment, but that of the whole goes on: in the other sphere man has the earthly for his object; not as regards its earthly results, but as connected with those higher ideas in the following which he overleaps the boundaries of this life. This sphere indeed is assigned only to the individual man, but to every man as such. The human race flows on amid earthly things merely: every man may find, if he notices himself, that he turns continually within these two circles, but age belongs more especially to the higher and nobler one; and it is not without object that its infirmities overtake us, for then, softened and tranquillised, we devote ourselves to loftier contemplations.

### LETTER XXIX. p. 143.

. . . You rejoice that I have returned to a more cheerful life, and as you take an affectionate interest in me, you may certainly find satisfaction in my increased strength; but as to the returning to a more cheerful life, that is a nice point:—it is at once true and not true. I have

never withdrawn myself from it; for to do so would be contrary to my notion, that as long as we live we should not estrange ourselves from the common affairs of life, but rather enter into them as far as strength and opportunity permit. Life is a duty which we must fulfil. We are in the world doubtless in order to be happy; but the well-disposed find their highest happiness in the performance of their duties; and the wise do not lament if no other falls to their lot than such as their own minds can afford them. But in another sense, I have not returned to social life. The change which the consciousness of greater bodily strength has wrought in me is this, that I have set about, now that I am able, all that I before had in my mind to do: remembering always the uncertainty of the period remaining to me for effecting it. The consequence of this is, that I have staid at home more than ever; and since my return from Nordernei I have drawn back more into myself; have employed myself yet more perseveringly with my own thoughts, and been more indifferent to everything else. Cheerful enjoyment of the *present* moment can never again be mine, since something is wanting to my life which can never be replaced, but the remem-

brance of the past affords an enjoyment not less serene and cheerful. I just now called it a duty to take a thorough part in life, both in its sweetest and bitterest moments, and to oppose to its outward impressions the deep inward persuasions of our own minds. I called it a duty, but it would also be a folly not to do so. The existence of man certainly stretches beyond the grave, and its different periods are naturally connected together: thus we must lay hold of and use the present, in order to mature ourselves for the future. The earth is a place of trial and moral education; a step to something higher and better:—we must here gain the strength requisite for grasping what is beyond it: for even the blessedness of heaven cannot be a mere gift presented to us: it must always be in a certain degree won by our own exertions; and it is the privilege of a well-regulated mental disposition to make our pleasure here the means of a participation in that blessedness. . . . . . . What you say of your first governess has pleased and touched me much. All well-disposed minds, to say nothing of those who feel tenderly as well as nobly, preserve through life a willingly-paid gratitude towards those who have taken care of them in youth. Even in

antiquity we find this truly and beautifully described. The management of children requires patience, love, and a complete devotion to our charge: and to see all this dedicated to us through long years, touches the softest and tenderest string in the bosom of man, whatever he may be in other respects. The feeling is, generally speaking, the same in all; it is in the demonstration of it that the difference of individual character is shown: but the measure of our gratitude is proportioned to the degree of love with which the task was performed. Many who are about children do their duty, but their heart is not in it; and that the child very soon perceives. I can see that it was this kindly feeling which you valued so much in her whom you have lost.

### Letter XXX. p. 149.

. . . In this life it is most important that we should not shut ourselves up within ourselves; but rather mix as intimately as circumstances will allow, with those of very different habits of feeling. Only in this way can we judge men according to their, and not our own one-sided views. On this depends our respect for the varieties of opinion entertained by others, and our unwil-

lingness to put any restraint upon their freedom. Besides this, there is nothing which employs the mind and the heart so attractively as the close study of character in all its smaller peculiarities. It matters not much if these peculiarities are not very strikingly developed; there is always a nature which offers some interior depths for us to fathom—to which we may apply the measure of our own judgment. But above all, the giving this direction to our thoughts has the advantage of making us more capable of entering into the inward existence, as it were, of those with whom we are intimate.

## Letter XXXI. p. 155.

. . . An intimate knowledge of his own heart is needful to every one: it is, in fact, the point on which every thing else depends: and in this self-investigation we should not confine our scrutiny to matters of duty and morality merely, but should embrace the whole character, and review it in all its parts. We limit our enquiry within far too narrow bounds if we only bring ourselves up for trial, as it were, to be pronounced guilty or not guilty. To improve our whole being, to elevate and purify our sentiments to the utmost, to give the greatest expansion

to our inward aspirations and efforts: these form as essential parts of the task imposed on man as the purity of his actions. There are many things, too, even in morals, which cannot be brought exactly to the measure of what is or is not duty, but must be judged of by a yet higher standard. There is a moral beauty which, like that of the features, requires a happy blending together of all the parts into one intellectual whole; and which visibly shows that whatever there is in it of individual peculiarity, flows from an unceasing pursuit, in our very inmost nature, of a heavenly perfection. In such a person, an image of infinite greatness, goodness, and beauty, continually floats before the mind; such as, indeed, he can never hope to reach, but by his eager endeavour to follow which, he becomes worthy of passing on to a higher state of existence. Even the cultivation of the intellectual faculties to a certain point belongs to this general ennoblement of character; but I am quite of your opinion, that it is not exactly in abundant book-knowledge and large scientific acquirements, that that kind of cultivation consists. It is nevertheless a duty, and is the natural wish of all,—not merely of those engaged in the turmoil and pursuits of this world,—to bring all

the opinions we embrace to be clear, decided, and demonstrable; and not to suffer any to exist in our mind which are not thus grounded. This only can be properly termed thinking; and for this, knowledge only furnishes the materials: for this last has no absolute value in itself, but gains all its importance from its influence on our course of thought. Man should seek knowledge for no other purpose than to enlarge his field of thought; and the two should go on *pari passu.* Knowledge would else remain dead and unfruitful. In men, however, this last is often so much the case, that it might be taken as the rule rather than the exception. This is the less surprising when we consider that their knowledge is generally directed to external and practical uses. But I have sometimes found it to be the case in women also, and then the disjunction of knowledge from thought is much more strange and displeasing. I have known a woman of this kind from my earliest youth, even before I went to the university, and I have watched her through every period of her life. She is well acquainted with the dead, and with most living languages; is free from all vanity and affectation; never allows her studies to interfere with any domestic duty: yet her learn-

ing does not make her an interesting person: though she has read the best, as well as the most difficult authors of all nations, she never writes a letter that gives one any extraordinary pleasure. You remark very truly, in regard to this, that Christ chose his disciples from rude and unlettered men: but this accorded well with the spirit and aim of the religion which he wished to found; and, moreover, in the country where he appeared, there was, at that time, no knowledge but that of a misunderstood and dead learning. The only teachers were the scribes, who interpreted the Scriptures according to their own subtle conceits, and behaved towards the people with oppression and contempt.

LETTER XXXII. p. 159.

. . . What you say of the serene composure of the countenance in death, even where the last struggles have been most severe, is observable generally in the dead. To some it gives even a glorified aspect. Sometimes, however, the expression of passion or of extreme agony does not cease even in death, as I have seen on the battle-fields of 1813 and 1815, though the countenances of many wore an expression full of holy peace. This beauty of death, as we may call it,

is the privilege of man only. It is far otherwise with beasts; for the finest and noblest horse is a repulsive and ugly object when lying dead on the field of battle. The cause is to be found in the expression given by the soul to the lineaments of the face. This expression, if the disposition was not corrupted, is of itself naturally calm, pure, and, to a certain degree, noble, even in persons of small mental gifts. In life its proportions are more or less disturbed by outward circumstances or inward excitement; and this is doubly the case from the sufferings of illness. In death these momentary influences on the countenance cease, and the original expression, which the soul has imparted, remains, like an engraved picture, and lasts as long as the corporeal parts remain undecomposed, even after the spirit has fled. The earthly form must naturally wear the appearance of perfect tranquillity since its restless, moving animal life is lapt in eternal slumber. But perhaps there is a yet higher cause for this appearance. We see only in death—for we cannot penetrate deeper—the separation of the soul from the body; the liberation of the spiritual from the bonds of the corporeal nature: but of its after flight we know nothing. Perhaps it casts off all traces of its earthly

nature at the moment that it leaves the body, and sheds a parting ray on all that remains behind, whose light we perceive in the features, responsive to the impressions of the soul.

## Letter XXXIII. p. 167.

I cannot quite enter into your ideas respecting death, and its relation to life. No one can fear it less than I do, neither am I much attached to life; but I have never known the feeling of an anxious longing for death; and although it be a nobler one than that of an absolute weariness of existence, it is nevertheless blameable. Life must first, for as long a period as Providence wills it, be enjoyed, or suffered, —in one word, gone through,—and that with a full submission, without murmuring, lamenting, or repining. There is one important law of nature which we should never lose sight of: I mean that of the ripening for death. Death is not a break in existence; it is but an intermediate circumstance, a transition from one form of our finite existence to another. Both states, —that before, and that after death,—are closely connected together; indeed, they are inseparably united, and existence *there* can only then properly begin, when it has reached the very

last moment of its development *here.* This moment of maturity for death, or in other words, the time when farther progress here becomes impossible, cannot be decided on by any human wisdom, or inward feeling; and to attempt to do so would be nothing better than the vain rashness of human pride. That decision can only be made by Him who can at once look through our whole course; and both reason and duty require that we should leave the hour to Him, and never rebel against his decrees by a single impatient wish. Believe me, even though you may call this view too strict an one, it is the only one which will lead us in peace through life, and prove a true support through all its vicissitudes. The first and most important thing in life is, to learn to master ourselves, and to throw ourselves with peaceful confidence on Him who never changes, looking on every situation, whether pleasant or otherwise, as a source from which our interior existence and individual character may draw increasing strength; and hence springs that entire submission which few attain to, although all fancy they feel it. Almost all set a certain bound to their submission, and think when this point is overpast, or appears to them to be so, the duty ceases. True resigna-

tion, which always brings with it the confidence that unchangeable Goodness will make even the disappointment of our hopes, and the contradictions of life, conducive to some benefit, casts a grave but tranquil light over the prospect of even a toilsome and troubled life. In order to attain, or to create within ourselves this tranquillity, we should seek only those things which are dependent on our own will. This disposition cannot always be quite attained, nor can we feel it at all moments: it cannot be compelled; it must spring up in the soul itself: but it is not long in doing so, when the soil is properly prepared; and this preparation consists principally, in a reasonable, quiet frame of mind, free from all selfishness. This we have in our own power, if we will but use our understanding and power of will; and the exercise of them with a determined purpose will give it. Fit occupations contribute materially towards creating a peaceful state of mind. And thus, finally, nothing can go forward in the soul which the man is not prepared, by foregone experience, either to encourage or repress.

## Letter XXXVI. p. 180.

Tegel, September 3, 1832.

I found every thing both in house and garden in the best order on my return hither. In the garden, when I compare it with last year, when I came only a few days later, there is a great and very agreeable difference. It is now beautifully green. . . . Last year the cholera and I came hither together, and many were very anxious on the subject, some in great terror: for myself, I took merely the customary precautions. It is now again in many places, and may very possibly reach Berlin, though at present there is no appearance of it: but should it do so, it would not now be feared more than any other complaint. We soon become accustomed to things; and many times the evil lies more in the imagination than in the reality. Even in real and severe illnesses, where the patient is a timid person, this frequently augments the symptoms. You praise my composure, and complain of the impatience of men in general, when they are ill. This, however, arises from the circumstance that most men have some daily active business which they are then obliged to give up. That is not the case

with me: the quiet which sickness requires is not in itself disagreeable to me: the restlessness attendant on some complaints is lessened too, when opposed by a tranquil mind. With positive pain it is indeed otherwise,—but even here much may be done. Generally we gain a great deal when we look upon illness, not so much as a suffering to be borne, as a requisite labour which we must get through as well as we can; for it is certain that the patient can contribute materially towards the upholding of his strength at the time, as well as towards his convalescence afterwards. My so-called patience is, however, no merit in me, but rather a gift of nature. When people let me alone,—do not trouble themselves much about me,—and do not weary me with pity and officious care,—an illness must be bad indeed to make me feel impatient. In your last letter you do not speak favorably of old age, but I remain true to my formerly expressed opinion, both as regards myself and others. I do not mean to say that I ever particularly desired to become old, any more than I now desire to become much older. Generally, I do not trouble myself greatly with wishes; but as I am become old without any choice in the matter, I think it wiser to keep my eyes fixed

on the advantages of that period of life, than on its disadvantages. And this I think of, merely with the view to preserve myself from its especial failings, and more especially from that of over-rating its powers: for herein I quite agree with you, that after a certain period, but which it is impossible to fix, the strength, even of the mind, begins to diminish. But old age—be it a beneficial order of nature or otherwise—belongs to the period of man's farther developement; and it would be unreasonable if we did not endeavour to discover in the intellectual character, the thoughts, the feelings, and the opinions, some trace of the same thing which is taking place physically at this period. But what is this in the true and noblest sense of the words? We must not dismiss age with the trite observation that in it we have gained experience, and taken leave of passion: this view is taken from a very low point, and what in this sense is called experience and freedom from passion is in truth worth very little. Age has nothing to do with experience: this is only to be acquired when actively employed in the world: but in men naturally well disposed, age brings with it tranquillity,—a cessation of those chances by which we are dragged into toils not

dependent on our own will,—patience, freedom from anxious cares;—and these privileges exalt and beautify every thing else. Age, indeed, is reproached with the contrary of all these qualifications; but this is much more rare, and happens only in characters which are not worth the trouble of talking about. Among the better sort we find either a good-natured cheerfulness, or a deep earnestness of thought, which, nevertheless, has nothing of gloom in it. From these two kinds of disposition it happens that among old people quite as many seek society as solitude. Age here operates according to the original difference of individual character. If this be contemplative, the man works up the stuff collected during a long life, and experience contributes to this, since from it he picks out and throws away whatever cannot profit his intellectual life. Of course, I do not mean that a great result, or a book is to be the produce of this; but generally a life, or even a dream made up of ideas of all sorts, grows out of it; an intellectual hovering over the past and the future, or rather, a judicious connecting together of both. If, on the contrary, the mind is by inclination or necessity turned to outward activity, employment is suitable for such an old age;

employment which, according to Schiller, is still busy in adding its grain of sand to all that is already laid up. There might be much to say about passion, but that I reserve for another opportunity.

LETTER XL. p. 195.

You ask me in your last letter to tell one more clearly what I mean by saying that at certain periods of one's life it is needful to do interiorly what we call in common life setting our house in order. The expression is a very simple one, and I mean it to be understood quite in the usual sense. We say that a man has set his house in order when he has taken care to arrange every thing for the possibility of his death, so that nothing remains to be done. The phrase means yet farther, that a man has made a proper disposition of the things he leaves behind him. Thus embarrassments, uncertainties, and disquiet, with regard to domestic affairs, are avoided, and order and peace established. This is the meaning of the phrase in the ordinary and worldly acceptation; but it has a much higher and nobler sense when applied intellectually. . . . I am not here speaking, or at least not exclusively so, of purely religious ideas;

what I now talk of relates also to those parts of our intellectual life which are not generally ranged in this class: nor indeed can we, for the most part, exactly fix what it is that I here call the highest and the noblest of man's mental affairs. Every one is nevertheless wont to be conscious that exactly that part of his character which is the deepest-rooted, and the most his own, is that on which he bestows the least trouble; and frequently suffers himself to be robbed of, or at least allows it to be brought into subordination to outward objects and circumstances. This bad habit should be eschewed, the little disturbing employments renounced, and the more important pursued. Yet more, during the short remainder of life, should this self-collectedness be endeavoured after in the province of feeling. But here, in general, there is a great and important difference. In what is intellectual our determinations have full power; for thought and reflection require some certain ground-work to go on upon; but in feeling this would not only be impossible, but would destroy it, if attempted. In matters of feeling, nothing can be done on compulsion; there a change can only go forward of itself, and is as much beyond our power as the ripening of fruit. It takes place involun-

tarily; and just when the whole constitution of the mind betrays that the alienation from earthly life has been completed in us. This change of feeling consists in the falling back of the mind upon itself; but still less than in the province of thought, can any rule be given which would apply to all cases. In me it has happened quite as a matter of course, that my whole soul being concentrated in one feeling, I became insensible to all others; at least as to the receiving any permanent impression; for I am not therefore become by any means cold or unsympathizing. I merely renounce all claim on any thing else, whether from men or fortune. Of course, I should feel calamity like others; that cannot be rooted out of human nature:—privation remains privation, and pain is still pain; but these things would not deprive me of my peace of mind; for that would be preserved by the thought that these circumstances are but the natural accompaniments of human life, and that it would be unbecoming not to have gained enough strength in a long life to be able to bring our higher and better nature to maintain itself against them.

## Letter XLII. p. 204.

I have often—almost from my childhood—begun to keep a diary, but after a time I have always burnt it. I am nevertheless sorry that I have not noted down at least where I was every day, what I principally did, and what occurred. I should be very glad now to have such a register from my tenth year. As for detailed journals which contain our judgment upon actions and motives, I do not think much of them. Try as we will, we can never write for ourselves only. Even if we never show, or mean to show, what is written, we have still an imaginary public before us. . . . What is chiefly to be feared from this is, that it should afford food for vanity. When a man occupies his mind so much with himself, he is in danger of thinking all that happens to him more important than what happens to others, and of considering every chance occurrence as the result of some special views of the Deity with regard to himself.

## Letter XLIII. p. 212.

Gall, whom you mention in your letter, was personally known to me, and I attended his

lectures on Craniology at Vienna, in 1797. I never believed in it for a moment. It was one of those discoveries which, when the *charlatanerie* which surrounded it was stripped away, showed but a very meagre portion of truth. Gall's really scientific merit consists in his having first rightly comprehended and pointed out the true form and foldings of the brain. Besides this, he was a very good physician. He died when I was last in Paris, and I saw him there for the second time. He left a clause in his will to the effect that his head should be amputated, and the skull added to his own collection; which was punctually done. As he took no money for his lectures, I could not refuse to comply with his wish to have a cast of my head. This was done in the same manner that a cast is taken from a dead body, and so unskilfully, that I was in danger of suffocation. The cast of my head must be still in his collection. This was no enviable fate, for Gall was exceedingly rough and unmannered, and all the vices which, according to his theory, a man with such a head *ought* to have, but which he had fortunately escaped, were thrown in his teeth without mercy every time that the Professor did him the honour to bring him forward in one

of his lectures as an example. I have myself heard very remarkable instances of this. Of course he did not spare me more than others, and as he was in no way bound to me had the right to do as he pleased. The great fault in Gall's system is his not perceiving that the moral and intellectual faculties of man are so closely connected. and that both are so intimately blended to form the whole character, that it is impossible to make such a superficial division of different organs as he has most arbitrarily decided on. In this, namely in the true estimation of the intellectual dignity of man, Lavater's mind was far in advance of his.

### Letter XLVII. p. 225.

You are quite right in saying that Mesdames de Stael and Laroche are very ill treated in the correspondence between Schiller and Goethe. This is Goethe's fault. In confidential correspondence, as in conversation, we may allow ourselves to laugh at the ridiculous in what we see, as long as it is done with no ill-natured intention, and are certain that it will be understood as we mean it. But when such letters are brought before the public, all such passages should be removed; and in this Goethe was far

too careless. . . . Goethe and Schiller knew no more of Madame de Stael than could be learned in a few conversations; and even that knowledge was very imperfect, for neither of them spoke French with fluency. They engaged in these conversations because they were excited by them, but without being able fully to express themselves in a foreign tongue, and thus they came to dislike her because she gave them so much trouble: but of this lady's real character they knew nothing. As for her being unfeminine, as some people have said, this must be reckoned as a part of the frivolous chatter which the common herd, both male and female, permit themselves in regard to women of a character and mind far above their reach. The modesty which forbears to judge of what is above us, is a quality far too noble to be found very frequently.

LETTER LII. p. 252.

. . . You remark of yourself that you have indeed read books worth reading, but much fewer of them than many suppose. . . . For my own part I confess to you that as far as the pleasure of reading is concerned, I could very easily live without any books at all. I have

not any real inclination for it; nay, in proportion to my length of life and scientific pursuits, I have read very little. Numbers of books which others have been very early acquainted with, I know only by name; and I may be surrounded by books, and know that new ones are among them, without feeling inclined to look into them. This indifference to books as a means of amusement, is not of late occurrence; it is no surfeit; but has been my feeling so long that it does not seem to me that I ever felt otherwise. I have, nevertheless, lived much with books, both by day and by night; but always with a view to the obtaining some definite piece of knowledge—to the pursuit of some fixed object of research; but this is quite different from that pleasure in reading which, in some men, amounts almost to a passion. This pleasure arises from a natural vivacity which I have never possessed;—from a need for *idea-stuff* (so to call it) but which is at the same time connected with a desire to obtain this stuff from without in various shapes and colours, rather than to draw it from the interior of our own minds in a less varied form. Yet this disposition is not therefore altogether to be blamed. The want of inclination to receive

impressions from without; the liking for solitary thought; the retiring into ourselves; is not always a sign of a metal without dross. It arises often from apathy—from an idle disposition, and has frequently more the character of a weak dream than of a course of fruit-bearing reflection. Nevertheless, it has a pleasure in it which I cannot liken to anything else: for we may thus lose ourselves in thought without exercising our memory, which is much easier to be done in this fashion than in conversation or writing; for we then think for ourselves only, and may thus overleap all middle terms, and jump at once to a conclusion. . . . .

You remark that you often hear it asked, What is happiness? If by this word we do not understand merely certain fortunate accidents, but rather that feeling through which the interior man receives his deepest sensations of pleasure or pain, the definition is not easy; for it is very possible to suffer many and great griefs, and yet not to feel thoroughly unhappy in consequence; but rather to find our moral and intellectual nature so purified and exalted thereby, that we would not wish to change this feeling for any other. On the other hand, we may be in the possession of much peace and enjoyment

in the things granted us—we may have absolutely no grief—and yet find within ourselves an insupportable void. To be happy we require a proper employment for the mind or the feelings,—certainly a varied one, and one that shall be suitable to the general character, and so much so as to satisfy every need of our existence. The nature of this employment, or rather of this mental interest, must be regulated by the individual destination which the course of his life gives to every one, or rather that which he finds in his own mind; and thus happiness or unhappiness depends on our good or ill success in attaining the ultimate end of our being.

I have received yours of June 24, and thank you much for it. I am rejoiced to perceive in it a peaceful, and even cheerful tone; and yet more rejoiced to find that I have contributed towards it. I write the truth to you without any concealment: as long as I can write without serious detriment to my eyes, I shall do so with my own hand, though perhaps my letters must be shorter: on the other part, I depend on your bearing it cheerfully when I can no longer do it at all. I consider it a part of man's duty to take as a natural and bearable thing whatever is in the course of nature. This has al-

ways been the object of my own endeavours, and I believe I may say I have succeeded in it in a great degree; and I wish to find this disposition in all, especially in those who stand in close connection with myself. Nothing gives me more real, and yet fruitless pain, than the seeing that others are anxious about me, or made uncomfortable on my account. Tranquillity and self-possession in all circumstances, joined with either cheerfulness or quiet melancholy, make life bearable, and raise the soul above the vicissitudes of life.

### LETTER LV. p. 264.

You have remarked that my hand-writing in my two or three last letters, is larger, plainer, and more decided: I had foreseen that this change would surprise you. It is a victory which my will, by dint of a strong resolution, has at last gained over my hand. But with regard to the inconvenience of being obliged to dictate every thing instead of writing it myself, I gain nothing; for this mode of writing is slower instead of being quicker than the former; but it is something that it looks more regular, and gives no trouble in the reading; while my former writing was fast becoming illegible. Thus in

our old age we come back to our childish text hand. There is a greater, more important, and more perplexing question with regard to old age; and that arises from the doubt which I, at least, have always felt, whether years do not produce a gradual and unnoticed enfeeblement of the mind, or the character, or of both. A reasonable and reflecting person must perceive that it can hardly be otherwise. All things wear out in time, and the dependence of the mind on the body subjects it to the same law as the rest of nature in this respect. Sometimes even, we catch ourselves in single things which give proof of it: but there remains always a tormenting thought, that these occurrences may be more frequent than we ourselves perceive. We naturally distrust our own judgment, since it too must suffer in the general decay; and in these matters we cannot learn the truth from others. Memory is generally said to fail the soonest; though I do not find this in my own case; and if it did, so long as the faculty was not altogether impaired, it is one whose loss I should care the least for. It is a greater evil, and one which we are slower to perceive, when there is a want of soundness in the judgment; —when we feel it laborious so to disentangle

ourselves from doubts as to arrive at a decided opinion. This unsteadiness of character spreads from action to thought; since all man's intellectual faculties are knit together in him into an inseparable union. But the worst loss of all is that felt in regard to the fertility of ideas, for these depend upon the well united strength, precision, and activity of all the faculties of the mind. Hence the weight of increasing years must necessarily exercise considerable influence over them: even the dulness of the senses must extinguish many. All ideas which depend on the susceptibility of the senses to external things, even though collected at an earlier period, must lose in accuracy and distinctness as well as in that evidence, especially, which external objects afford to found fresh thoughts upon. But the state I most anxiously guard against is that where the mind is in a manner becalmed and confines itself to the dull repetition of the same worn-out routine of ideas, fondly imagining that it is all the while in a satisfactory state of activity. What is needed to make life really valuable and happy, is a mind thoroughly alive, —rich in the power of reproducing all that it gains inwardly from its own deep communings with itself, or externally from its observations

on men and things: or else the steady working out of a series of ideas, begun long ago, and embracing in their course perhaps the greater portion of a life. Nor should this be aspired to merely by professed thinkers, by those belonging to a higher order of intellect and cultivation; it should be the aim of all. For every man has within him a world of ideas and feelings, truths and prejudices, fancies and dreams, which he is anxious to keep alive and active, and which he wishes to carry out yet farther for the sake of mental occupation. However unintellectual a man may be by nature, there is no reproach he fears so much as that of mental imbecility.

I received your last letter later than usual, and it grieved me much to see that you were again suffering from low spirits. You say indeed yourself that time will bring the remedy; but life is too short to allow of our being robbed of whole weeks thus. For some time too, I had rejoiced to see you so much more calm and cheerful. Be so again, I earnestly entreat you; we can do much when once we believe that we can. The mood we are in no doubt arises often from circumstances over which we have little control, but they take stronger hold, and become

much more dangerous to our peace of mind when we give way to them. Our surest defence is, to oppose to these some stronger feeling. You have often yourself experienced that the heart can be so warmed in some elevating and engrossing subject as at once to put to flight all despondency and gloom.

## Letter LVI. p. 268.

The words of St. Paul, which you quote in your letter, " If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," certainly convey a deep truth, which lays hold on the mind in its very inmost part. They tell in the shortest and simplest manner, the superterrestrial nature of man; for we cannot but recognise in the highest, noblest, and most truly worthy feelings of man an origin that is not of this world. The true ennoblement of our nature consists in the feeling that our existence stretches beyond the bounds of this globe. It is this which gives that peculiar feeling to man, which so unceasingly accompanies all those who reflect at all,—that the world around him, in which he immediately acts, and from which his enjoyments spring, does not suffice him: and that his desires and his hopes drag him towards

another, as yet unknown, and only dimly anticipated. It is in the different relations in which every one places himself to the one and the other world, that the difference of individual character is chiefly found: for it gives the mind an original bent upon which all the rest depends. He who is wholly taken up with the earthly, so as to have neither thought nor feeling for a higher world, must in truth be termed most wretched: he is without the highest and best inward satisfaction; and is incapable of arriving at the true perfection of his moral nature. But there is also a certain contempt of the earth, and an erroneous mode of occupying ourselves with an existence beyond it, which even if it does not lead to a neglect of the duties of life, yet at least prevents us from enjoying the good in this world which Providence designed for us. The truly elevated frame of mind avoids this double one-sidedness: it takes its starting point from the endless traces of the Divinity which pervade every thing on earth, and are to be found through all creation in the wise arrangement and loving solicitude for the comfort of every created thing: and in this frame of mind we connect those pure feelings of the heart which truly belong to a better

world, with such of our social relations as we can devote ourselves to without impairing the true worth of our nature. It is thus that we seek and engraft the super-terrestrial upon the terrestrial, and become capable of elevating ourselves to the full purity of a heavenly life. In this sense we live for another world, even in this; for the earthly then becomes merely the shell of the divine, and this last, by no means lying hidden within, but beaming forth visibly and brightly, becomes the individual and animating feeling. With these views the soul easily separates itself from the earthly, and raises itself above it; and with this frame of mind is immediately connected the feeling of immortality, and of a state of existence which will have its beginning on the other side of the grave. A mind which in the right sense does not live for this world alone, does not receive this feeling as a mere hope and desire; for it is a certainty, bound up with the very consciousness of existence. Had we not been endowed with this knowledge as soon as we were placed upon the earth, we should indeed have been cast down into utter misery: for there would be no compensation for earthly misfortune, and what is more and would be more lamentable too, the

greatest of all problems would remain unsolved, and our interior existence would remain without the one thing which gives the seal and finish to its perfection.

You mention in your letter the discomforts of age: they are certainly,—with some few exceptions where the strength is retained to a late period,—many and great; and they are so especially, because they recur at every moment, and accompany us with increasing weight to the grave. Of these, according to my own feelings, the most oppressive is the impaired activity, and consequent slowness and difficulty in effecting what we wish to do, without help. And when it comes to a choice whether I will allow myself to be helped, or continue to do things for myself, though with less facility, I choose the latter; because I feel a natural repugnance to the being dependent. But while I concede all these inconveniences, which may amount at last to real suffering, and which I for the most part already feel in my own person, I cannot regard old age with dislike, nor do I make any complaint of it. It is requisite to the completion of human life that there should be such a decay of strength; and to go through with that life as a

whole, gradually unfolding one part out of another, has in it something tranquillising, because it shows man to be in harmony with all nature. And besides, our feelings alter so far, that we can bear these outward inconveniences the easier in consequence. We grow less impatient, we feel that it does not become us to complain of the course of nature, and are much more aware that interior peace and equality of mood are capable of throwing their gentle glow over every exterior circumstance. It is clearly an advantage of age that the material sharpness and severity of external evils is taken away, and so placed within the light of reflection, that we can overlook their single power, whilst occupying the thoughts with the always increasing and tranquillising influence of the universal.

## Letter LVII. p. 273.

Tegel, August and September, 1834.

. . If there must needs be a hot summer, it is better that it should be this year than next; for next year the extraordinary season would have been laid to the expected comet, and thus the erroneous opinion with regard to these bodies would have been strengthened. As far as I am myself concerned, I can very well bear

the heat . . . but the uninterrupted drought which has accompanied it this year, the drying up of the plants, and the withering of the leaves, is always a sad sight. We may, indeed, with good ground presume that the actual arrangement of the world is exactly the best that could be, and this of itself puts a stop to all short-sighted murmuring; which indeed no reasonable person will ever indulge in: otherwise it would seem strange that living and sentient things, from plants up to man, should be placed in subordination to, and made dependent upon, the rough, wild elements. It is as if nature intended that the great material and elemental relations should be first allowed to take their course, ere the prosperity and comfort of sentient beings could be attended to: and this seems nearly as it is in domestic life, where not only the higher intellectual occupations of the mind must often be postponed to the common daily drudgery of the body, but where also activity in business, which relates merely to the outward world, is set higher in men's estimation, than the inward inclination to thought and study. In both cases we can trace the feeling that the ground must be prepared and secured by bodily and outward circumstances, before the intellectual and inte-

rior life can find a quiet sheltered spot where its blossoms can unfold without danger of blight. In things undertaken by men—and therefore always imperfect—this is very perceivable. Human reason and power cannot attain their object without some sacrifice of good: but such an explanation is not admissible where the order of things is settled by Omniscience and Omnipotence, and therefore what is often said with regard to this postponement of the spiritual to the corporeal, if such a phrase may be allowed, is not at all satisfactory. There must be something more in it which we cannot yet understand; and which perhaps springs out of unknown relations between the two; for if, on the one hand, we know but little that is certain respecting the spirit or soul, on the other, the actually existing substance and nature of the body,—i. e. matter,—is absolutely unknown and incomprehensible.

## Letter LX. p. 283.

Tegel, December and January, 1835.

We are again at the end of the year, dear Charlotte, and as far as regards myself I can call it a happy one, however quickly it has flown, for it has afforded me the pleasure of re-

maining uninterruptedly here, and has given me the hope also of being released from all further wearisome visits to the Baths. The paralytic tremor is wonderfully less, although I cannot exactly assume this as a proof of increased strength; neither is it entirely gone, but varies from day to day. But be that as it may, it is at any rate a great present relief. It would be very unreasonable in me if I were to complain of bodily suffering; for what I have to endure in this respect is very bearable, and requires only a very common degree of patience and resignation. I could draw much more largely upon both without exhausting them, and it is yet in the hands of fate whether I may not have to do so: but I have no anxious fears for the future. Man is placed in the world to gain experience, and to use it for his own inward benefit, Happiness and freedom from pain should be received and enjoyed with gratitude; but we should never advance any claim to them. You see from this that I neither suffer at present nor am in any state to cause anxiety; and that even should I have to encounter greater evils,—of which I see no prospect at present,—I should have strength to bear them. I beg you therefore, most earnestly, not to allow the state

of my health to make an injurious—and therefore to me most afflicting—impression on you. This is no matter of taste merely, and still less is it any whim of mine. On the contrary, I am firmly convinced that it is no less a duty than it is a sign of nobility of mind, to receive the dispensations of Providence with quiet self-possession. I am aware that we cannot always be complete masters of ourselves in this respect, but we can strive to be so, and to be in earnest in striving, is to have half won our object.

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The Editors have concluded with some extracts in which the personal health of this good and amiable man is alluded to, in order to show practically how a strong mind and a Christian spirit can meet and rise superior to the infirmities of age. Wilhelm von Humboldt, when writing these letters, so full of cheerful resignation and good sense, was fast sinking into what might be called almost a premature grave (he died in April 1835): his sight was so much impaired that he had reason to apprehend total blindness: his hand was so enfeebled by paralytic tremor that he could scarcely write, and his general strength failing: but under all these

distressing visitations his last care was to cheer the sadness of his afflicted friend without giving a farther thought to his own sufferings than was needful to enable him to bear them with serenity. No panegyric is here needed;—his life and his letters speak to the heart; and cold must that heart be which does not feel warmed and elevated by the contemplation of a character which, alas for the world! has but few parallels.

THE END.

C. WHITTINGHAM, PRINTER, CHISWICK.